

THE CATASTROPHE
KERENSKY'S OWN STORY
OF THE
RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

BY
ALEXANDER F. KERENSKY



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK : 1927 : LONDON

COPYRIGHT, 1927, BY
D. APPLETON & COMPANY

Copyright, 1927, by The New York Times Company
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

THE subject of this book is an historical episode but the book itself is not history. It is simply the story of an eyewitness, who accidentally found himself in the center of events marking the turning point in the history of the biggest nation on the European continent.

A correct conception of present developments in Russia is impossible without some understanding of the inner substance of the Russian Revolution of March, 1917, *i.e.*, of the period between the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of Bolshevik absolutism.

It would be strange and ludicrous, however, to demand from me, a close participant of those events, that measure of historical objectivity and impartiality which we have the right to expect from the scientific historian describing the deeds of others.

The participant in historical events does not perceive clearly the consequences of his own actions, but merely grasps, more or less, the significance of these consequences. He does know well, however, the psychologic motives which prompt him to this or that practical decision. On the other hand, the historian finds it extremely difficult to penetrate into the inner spiritual laboratory of the actors of an historical drama—into those recesses of the soul where these events matured. He does see well the consequences of the actions of other men. By viewing these actions from the vantage point of time he acquires the privilege of objectivity.

INTRODUCTION

To be sure, any participant of an historical drama can by the force of hindsight advance the portrayal of the conduct and actions of his contemporaries and those of his own to a point of view approximating that from which the events will be seen ten, twenty or thirty years hence. But such historical narration cannot really pretend to be history, because the writing of history requires the maturing through a process of many decades of the events described.

Nevertheless epochs close to periods particularly rich in historicity (as measured by years and not by substance) bring forth many "objective histories" from the pens of falsifiers. In Russia we have had our full quota of these after March, 1917.

I make bold to believe that this book will not add to the number of such works, for I have not tried to write history but have merely sought to add some raw material for history.

My unhistorical objectivity consists precisely and only in the fact that I present the events and psychology of the March Revolution as they really were, concealing nothing and refraining from falling under the influence of the political and psychologic attitudes of the present moment.

My task here consists in portraying the events of the Russian Revolution as a whole, *i.e.*, as they really were, as they presented themselves to me then and not as they seem now. This is the only historicity of which the participant of historical events is capable: to reveal the true psychology of his epoch and to restore the motivization of his actions.

Having stood in the very center of the events that changed the course of Russian history and occupied in this center the mathematical point of centrality, I saw

INTRODUCTION

the Revolution more as a whole than in its details, and experienced the Revolution as a single act of national struggle for the emancipation and salvation of Russia, rather than as a series of separate episodes of the inner struggle of parties and classes.

I hope that the reader who will have the patience to read this book through to the end will realize that Russia's tragedy of 1917 is not to be explained by the erroneous conception prevalent abroad that the Russian people are unfit for liberty and incapable of democratic, cultured self-government.

The reader will see that the triumph of the Bolshevik counter-revolution was not due to the fact that ideology of Bolshevism, essentially Western in its origin, corresponds to the "savage, Asiatic character of the Russian people."

He will see that in the tragic moment of the struggle for the salvation of Russia from the double pressure of the Germans at the front and the Bolsheviks in the rear there was in the social consciousness of Russia sufficient force of sacrificial patriotism, and that Russia alone was not responsible for coming out of the war a vanquished victor.

In short, the reader will perceive how the entire process of the inner struggle in Russia, in 1917, against the consequences of the fall of the monarchy was inseparably bound with the continuing struggle at the front for the very existence of Russia as an independent nation.

The French Revolution of 1789 came *before* the outbreak of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. In Germany, in 1918, the monarchy fell *after* the War. In Russia the Revolution came *in the midst* of war, at its most acute and critical moment.

INTRODUCTION

Russia's "guilt" consisted in the fact that all the consequences—psychologic, political and economic—of war tension and exhaustion manifested themselves long before they appeared in the West. And the West, having conquered its war and post-war difficulties, failed to understand and could not understand the meaning and substance of the extremely painful and complex process of the dissolution of the old social fabric in Russia, a process which was experienced in milder form after the War by all European belligerent countries.

For the sake of her victory, Germany in 1917 sent us Lenin and helped to poison Russia with Bolshevism. For the sake of allied victory, and with equal zeal, some of the Allies undermined the national, revolutionary Provisional Government of Russia. The Germans believed that all was permissible in war, while the Allies acted on the supposition that they could do anything they liked in Russia after the disappearance of the Czarist government.

This attitude may perhaps have been quite natural from the point of view of the interests of Germany or, let us say, England. But the struggle for the liberty and independence of Russia which we were then waging was not thereby made easier.

The key to an understanding of the grave difficulties experienced by Russia during the period of the Revolution and which she is experiencing to this day must be sought in the complex and at times ambiguous international situation as it existed during the war.

It is nonsense to say, as do some, that Russia was unfit for liberty and that by her entire past she was prepared for the barbarism of Bolshevism.

The Russia of the Czarist epoch was, indeed, a back-

INTRODUCTION

ward country politically. This is an undeniable truth. But her national culture, her social order, her economic development, her spiritual ideals were on a very high plane of development, in which there was no room for the zoologic experiments of Lenin.

Moreover, beginning with the period of the Russo-Japanese War and the liberation movement of 1905, after the establishment of a representative legislative assembly, Russia appeared to be maturing also politically. Before the World War there was no longer any doubt that the transition of Russia from a semi-constitutional absolutism to a parliamentary democracy was only a question of a few years.

The War interrupted the sound political evolution of Russia.

The Bolshevik reaction, born of the blood and horrors of war, threw Russia back a century.

In the struggle for a sound and free Russia, the Russian people will, however, win back their rightful place in the family of nations.

I may add one more point. In my narrative of the events of 1917 I am compelled to speak of myself to a greater extent than I desired. It was impossible to avoid this in speaking of the main acts of the Revolution. However, throughout the period of its activity the Provisional Government was at all times the genuine instrument of expression of the overwhelming majority of the organized political forces of the country. For this reason the names of the leaders of the first Russian republican government are but the pseudonyms of that Russia which fought stubbornly for her national existence on the basis of liberty and independence.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the appearance of

INTRODUCTION

this book in English is due to the very kind and thoughtful cooperation given me by my friends, Mr. Joseph Shaplen and Mr. A. J. Sack, to whom I feel deeply indebted.

ALEXANDER KERENSKY.

New York.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	V
CHAPTER	
I. THE FOUR DAYS THAT ENDED THE RUSSIAN MONARCHY	I
II. BEFORE THE CRASH	77
III. WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERN- MENT	109
IV. THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS	126
V. RESTORATION OF THE FRONT	142
VI. DISSOLUTION OF THE ARMY	167
VII. GUTCHKOFF	175
VIII. FIRST VISITS TO THE ARMY	193
IX. THE OFFENSIVE	207
X. THE BATTLE	221
XI. THE NATION'S VICTORY	245
XII. THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY	258
XIII. THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE	279
XIV. THE CONSPIRATORS ON THE RIGHT	287
XV. LAVRE KORNILOFF	297
XVI. THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFEN- SIVE	302
XVII. THE DRIVE AGAINST THE PROVI- SIONAL GOVERNMENT	317
XVIII. GATCHINA	324
XIX. CONCLUSION	371

THE CATASTROPHE

CHAPTER I

THE FOUR DAYS THAT ENDED THE RUSSIAN MONARCHY

ON Monday, March 12, 1917, at about eight o'clock in the morning, I was awakened by a voice saying: "Get up! Nekrassoff is on the telephone. He says the Duma has been dissolved, the Volinsk Regiment has mutinied and is leaving its barracks. You are wanted at the Duma at once."

Eight o'clock was an early hour for me, as I was in the habit of working until three or four o'clock in the morning. The political situation had grown ominously stormy during the preceding days and several minutes passed before I grasped the full significance of the news transmitted by Nekrassoff. It came to me with a jolt, but I soon perceived, or rather felt, that the decisive hour had struck.

I jumped up, dressed quickly and hurried to the Duma—a five-minute walk.

My first thought was to keep the Duma in session and to establish close contact between the Duma and the army and the people.

I am not sure whether I asked my wife to telephone to Sokoloff, a friend who lived near the barracks, or whether I sent a message by some one I met on my way to the Duma, but I did my best to get in touch with the Volinsk Regiment, which had mutinied without any apparent plan or purpose. I tried to get the regiment

THE CATASTROPHE

and other insurgents who had flocked around it to assemble at the Duma. Later Miliukoff told me that, passing the barracks at about nine o'clock that morning, he had seen some of our political friends calling upon the Volinsk Regiment as it was pouring out of the barracks to join us at the Duma.

The stage had long been set for the final crash, but, as is usually the case in such events, no one expected it to come precisely on the morning of March twelfth. How could I, for instance, have guessed as I rushed out of my apartment in what a different position I would be when I returned to it? How could I have imagined that I would never return to my home again but for two or three hours!

At about half past eight I arrived at the small side entrance (the library entrance) of the Tauride Palace, seat of the Duma, and here I was swept up by the whirlwind in which I was to live for eight months. From that moment on I lived in the center of those amazing events, so momentous and so terrible, in the very heart of the tempest which in the end was to cast me out, in exile, to a distant foreign shore.

As I recall the events of that day—Russia standing at the parting of the ways—I feel again the tense anxiety which animated me then. As I approached the Duma, every step seemed to bring me closer to the quivering forces of newly awakened life, and when the aged doorkeeper, as usual, closed the door of the palace behind me I felt this time as if he were barring behind me forever the way back to the old Russia, the Russia that had still existed the day before and even in the early morning of that glorious, awe-inspiring Monday.

The door closed. I threw off my overcoat. There was no more day or night, morning or evening. Only

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

by the ebb and flow of the crowds, by the coming and going of the human tides could we feel that night had come or the day returned. For five days we hardly ate anything, and none of us slept at all. But we did not feel the need of food or sleep. We had suddenly become endowed with extraordinary mental clarity. We were able to grasp and understand everything in a flash. Nothing escaped our minds and nothing seemed to interfere with anything else in the adjustment and readjustment of our perceptions and ideas. Afterwards, looking back at these events from a distance, one could scarcely believe that all this chaos of happenings had been crowded into four days, and it was difficult to understand how our group in the Duma, without sleep or food, could have dealt with such a kaleidoscopic complexity of affairs.

It was an extraordinary time, an inspired time, a time of bold daring and great suffering. It was a time unique in the pages of history. All the small daily preoccupations of private life and all party interests vanished from our consciousness. One common devotion and anxiety united us. We had one common inspiration—Russia! Russia in peril, struggling through blood and chaos, Russia betrayed by the old régime, Russia a prey to the blind, raging, hungry mob. Between these two gulfs—on the one hand the decaying, tottering government and, on the other, the anarchic sweep of the people in revolt—a new light appeared. Russia became conscious of a new purpose, a new will. Inside the old walls of the Tauride Palace this devotion to the state and the nation burst forth in clear form, expressed in a tremendous effort and determination to save the country from anarchy and to shape the life of the people along new lines of law, freedom and social justice.

THE CATASTROPHE

Representatives of nearly all classes rallied around the Duma in those first days of the Revolution. In those first days of the Revolution the Duma became the symbol of the state and the nation. By a determined, united effort a new authority and the rudiments of a new national structure were set up. I saw new forms of government shaped by men who the day before would have turned in horror from what they did that day with their own hands. They did it because something inexplicable, mysterious, miraculous had happened—that which we are accustomed to call revolution. This something lit up the souls of men with a purifying fire and filled them with love and readiness for boundless self-sacrifice.

We forgot everything that was merely personal, all that was a matter of class or caste, and became for the moment simply men conscious of our common humanity. It was a moment when every man came into touch with what is universal and eternally human. It was most exhilarating to see about me these men, so transformed, working together with sublime devotion for the common good. Historians, sociologists and theorists of all kinds will describe learnedly and wisely the events of March 12, 1917, in Russia, in Petrograd, in the Tauride Palace. They will find scientific, historical (and very prosaic) explanations to account for the performance of every actor in the first scene of this great tragedy of death and rebirth. They may label the drama and the actors in any way they please, but they will have said nothing that is essential if they forget to say that the Revolution was a miracle, an act of creation performed by the will of humanity, an epic sweep towards the eternal and universal ideal.

I, who witnessed and participated in all these events, can testify that the so-called bourgeoisie, the members

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

of the Temporary Committee of the Duma and, later, of the Provisional Government, who were at the center of affairs in those first days of the Revolution, showed not less but, if possible, more idealism and sacrifice than the representatives of the democracy, especially the so-called "revolutionary democracy." I can testify that in those great days the bourgeoisie was the very one who stood fearlessly for the salvation of the nation against the narrow, selfish interests of its class. The representatives of the bourgeoisie made their renunciation joyfully as the greatest, holiest and happiest act of their lives.

As a matter of fact this government was neither bourgeois nor of any special class, but genuinely representative of the whole people. It was dominated solely by the consciousness of the ideal of liberty and social service, which is the essential thing in a revolution. Later everything changed. The same people who had been associated fraternally in the government could hardly recognize their own actions of two or three months before. The deeds they had been proud of they apologized for as mistakes and tried to lay the responsibility for them upon others. They gradually returned to their former week-day state of mind. The common task of national regeneration, begun with a universal, heroic, creative impulse in those great days when men's souls became transfigured and were raised above themselves, was gradually forgotten and those who had shown themselves heroes and social prophets became more and more concerned about their private interests. One side began to think in wrathful misgiving: "We conceded too much." The other side, relying on the blind, elemental force of the masses, cried: "We took too little." They could not understand that precisely in that first hour of the Revolution,

in the hour of common inspiration and common effort, they had unconsciously seen things in their true proportions and realized what was necessary for the whole nation.

The power of the Revolution lay not in the material forces at its command but in the common will, in the solidarity of the whole people. This common will recreated the life of the nation and filled it with a new spirit. The principles which Russian culture and civilization had been evolving and accumulating for centuries assumed concrete form—those principles for which the whole Russian intelligentsia, the whole Russian people had fought for decades. It was not physical force, still less the organized force of the revolutionary democracy or of any party which overthrew the autocracy and the dynasty. The revolutionary democracy appeared as an organized force only when the first stage of the Revolution was over. This is an indisputable fact which history will establish beyond contradiction.

I assert emphatically that no one class can claim to be the author of the great Russian Revolution, nor arrogate to itself alone the honor of bringing about that upheaval. The Russian proletariat (especially the proletariat of Petrograd) is peculiarly unjustified in making this claim. On March eleventh, the day before the crash, the so-called Information Bureau of the Parties of the Left (*i.e.*, the Social-Revolutionaries, Social-Democrats, Bolsheviks, Populist-Socialists and Labor party) held its regular meeting between 6 and 7 P.M. in my apartment. At that meeting men who a few days later became the most uncompromising revolutionaries asserted emphatically that the revolutionary movement was losing strength; that the workers were quite passive in their attitude towards the

demonstrations of the soldiers; that these demonstrations were unorganized and without purpose or direction; that it was impossible to look for a revolution of any kind in the near future, and that we should concentrate our efforts on propaganda alone as a means of preparing a serious revolutionary movement later on. Such was the attitude and the opinion of the spokesmen of the most extreme revolutionary elements only the day before the outbreak of the Revolution.

In the same way, the bourgeois majority of the Duma, on the day before the Revolution, was still seeking a loyal compromise out of the *impasse* into which Russia had been driven by a government that had lost its head together with its sense of duty to the nation. But the next day, when the dissolution of the Duma and the spontaneous uprising of the Petrograd garrison showed clearly the abyss to which Russia had been brought by the Czarist régime, all doubt concerning the reality of the situation vanished, people ceased to judge by their usual standards, and the Revolution became a fact as a result of the joint effort of all the sound political forces of the nation. I cannot emphasize any too often that the great Russian Revolution was accomplished by the whole people, that the achievement belongs to the nation as a whole, that all had a share in it and none can lay exclusive claim to it.

But let us resume our narrative:

I ran down the long, deserted corridor and at last found some deputies in the Catherine Hall. I remember that Nekrassoff, Efremoff, Vershinin and some one else were there. From them I learned that Rodzianko, President of the Duma, had received an order from Nicholas II dissolving the Duma at midnight on March twelfth; that he sent an urgent telegram to the Czar at General Headquarters at Mohileff, and to the gen-

THE CATASTROPHE

erals in command of the various fronts, saying that the revolt in Petrograd was spreading, that, in addition to the Volinsk Regiment, the Engineer Battalion of the Guards had mutinied, that the Preobrajensk Regiment was restive and was about to come out into the streets, etc.

I rushed to the telephone and urged some friends to go to the barracks of the insurgent regiments and direct the troops to the Duma. The deputies were rapidly filling the lobbies, although the so-called "unofficial" session of the Duma was not to convene before two o'clock in the afternoon. The meeting of the council of party leaders was to begin only at noon. There was an atmosphere of increasing tension.

During the preceding days the deputies had come to look to us of the Left wing for reliable information as to the state of mind of the masses and the developments in the city. We had succeeded fairly well in establishing a scouting and news-gathering organization all over the capital. Every ten or fifteen minutes reports came to me by telephone. On my appearance in the chambers of the deputies of the Right and Moderate parties, where an atmosphere of alarm prevailed, I was surrounded and bombarded with questions as to what was going on, what was likely to happen and what would become of us. I replied frankly that the decisive hour had struck, that there was a revolution in the city, that the troops were on their way to the Duma and that it was our duty as the representatives of the people to receive them and make common cause with the army and the populace in revolt.

The news that the troops were well under way to the Tauride Palace at first alarmed the deputies, but the fear and anxiety disappeared in the thrill of ex-

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

pectation of their arrival. We of the opposition spoke to the leading members of the Duma, all of whom soon joined us, and we insisted that the Duma go immediately into official session, in defiance of the imperial order of dissolution. We demanded that the Duma take into its hands the direction of events and, if necessary, proclaim itself the supreme authority in the land. These proposals would have met with indignation the day before from the loyal majority of the Duma, but now they were received quite calmly and, by some members, even with evident sympathy. New voices were constantly added in approval.

Meanwhile developments in the city were gathering explosive momentum. One regiment after another had come out into the streets without the officers. Some of the officers had been arrested and there were even isolated cases of murder. Others had slipped away, deserting their units in view of the obvious mistrust and ugly temper of the soldiers. Everywhere the population was making common cause with the troops. Masses of workmen were pouring into the center of the city from the suburbs, and there was lively firing in many quarters. Soon news was brought to us of skirmishes with the police. The government machine guns were firing on the people from roofs and belfries. The throngs of soldiers and civilians in the streets gave no indication, however, of being moved by any clear aim or purpose. Animated by revolutionary indignation and dazed by the dramatic spectacle of which they were such a conspicuous part, the multitudes had to be given an aim and a point of concentration. It was difficult to see as yet what would become of the movement. It was quite clear, on the other hand, that the government intended to take advantage of the growing chaos and anarchy for its own dark purposes. Of

THE CATASTROPHE

this there could no longer be any doubt. The hunger riots of the preceding days, the military disintegration, the alleged need of dissolving the "disloyal" Duma—all this was obviously intended by the government to serve as proof that the position of the country and of the government was desperate and that it had become impossible to continue the war. This was the path along which the government was moving and this was clearly its aim—a separate peace.

The dissolution of the Duma coming as the autocracy's reply to the numerous attempts of the majority to find a loyal way out of the crisis was so striking and eloquent a move that the loyalists no longer had a single plank to stand upon. They were prepared for a dramatic change and only needed to be encouraged. With each passing moment the deputies were becoming increasingly aware of the fact that the Duma was the only center of authority commanding respect and that it was essential to take a final, decisive, irrevocable step.

The anxiety and alarm concerning the populace gradually subsided and the deputies began to go more frequently to the windows of the palace, scanning the empty streets which now seemed to have taken on an air of portentous mystery. Would the troops come to the Duma? Would there be an outlet to the growing tension which was rapidly becoming intolerable?

"Where are your troops? Are they coming?" many of the deputies asked me in a tone of anger and irritation. "My troops!" It had seemed in the last few days as if every one in the Duma had begun to look to me and to my closest associates as the center upon which the whole course of events depended. Soon the atmosphere within the Tauride Palace began to change, as inside the Duma the relative strength

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

and disposition of the various parties had changed by the pressure of events outside. Realizing this the deputies of the Right and Moderate parties began to approach the future leaders, men whom they had hardly deigned to notice the day before. "My troops!" Most of the deputies called them mine. Perhaps it was because I had unbounded confidence that the troops would come. I was waiting to lead them into the Duma and by doing so to bring about the union of the mutinous soldiers and the representatives of the people, in which alone lay salvation. I kept on telephoning, running to the windows, sending messengers into the street to see whether the troops were coming. Still they did not come. Time was passing with terrible speed.

The council of party leaders met long before the appointed hour to consider the situation and to work out a plan of action to be submitted for approval to the unofficial meeting of the Duma. Those of us who met in the council laid aside all differences of party, class and age. We were dominated by one thing only: the realization that Russia was on the brink of ruin and that we must do our best to save her. Rodzianko, very excited, opened the meeting and informed us of the steps he had taken within the last forty-eight hours. He read the telegrams he had sent to the Czar the day before and told us of his telephonic conversation with the Czar's ministers. What was to be done? How were we to determine what was really happening outside the Duma walls and what should be our attitude towards these events? The Duma majority had a great deal to forget before it could range itself on the side of the Revolution, embark upon an open conflict with the Czarist power and raise its hand against the traditional authority.

THE CATASTROPHE

We, representatives of the opposition, Nekrassoff, Efremoff, Tcheidze and I, now officially proposed what might be termed the revolutionary course. We demanded that the Duma go immediately into official session, taking no notice whatever of the order of dissolution. Some wavered. The majority and Rodzianko did not agree with us. Argument, persuasion and passionate appeals were in vain. The majority still believed too much in the past. The crimes and follies of the government had not yet succeeded in rooting this faith out of their souls. The council rejected our proposal, deciding that the Duma convene in "unofficial" session. Politically and psychologically this meant that there was to be a private meeting of a group of private individuals, many of them men of great influence and authority, but still only private individuals. The meeting was not one of a state institution and it had no formal authority for which it could claim general recognition.

This refusal to continue in session formally was perhaps the greatest mistake of the Duma. It meant committing suicide at the very moment when its authority was supreme in the country and it might have played a decisive and fruitful part had it acted officially. This refusal revealed the characteristic weakness of a Duma composed in its majority of the representatives of the upper classes, and which inevitably gave a distorted reflection of the country's opinions and state of mind. And so the Imperial Duma, born as a result of Stolypin's counter-revolutionary coup d'état of 1907, which destroyed the more democratic electoral law of 1905, wrote its own death warrant at the moment of the revolutionary renaissance of the people. The majority deliberately put the Duma on a level with other self-appointed organizations, like the Council of Work-

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

men's and Soldiers' Deputies, which was just then making its appearance. Later there were efforts to revive the Duma as an official institution, but these came too late. The Duma died on the morning of March twelfth, the day when its strength and influence were at the highest.

Next day, March thirteenth, there were already two centers of authority, both of which owed their existence to the Revolution: the Duma in unofficial session, with its Temporary Committee, named as a provisional body to direct events, and the Council or Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, with its Executive Committee.

I cannot now remember all the discussions that took place that day in the council of party leaders and afterwards at the "unofficial" sitting of the Duma. I remember that the Duma, which met between noon and two o'clock in the afternoon, decided to form a Temporary Committee invested with unlimited powers. The members of the committee were Rodzianko, Shulgin, Miliukoff, Tcheidze, Nekrassoff, Karauloff, Dmitriukoff, Rjevsky, Shidlofsky, V. Lvoff, Engelhardt, Shingarioff and myself. All parties were represented, except the extreme Right and Government Nationalists. These members of the Right wing, who not long before had behaved with contemptuous arrogance in the Duma, suddenly disappeared from the scene. Nominees of the government and some of them its paid agents, these outcasts of the nation melted away like wax in the sun, in the first rays of freedom dawning upon Russia.

The meetings in the Tauride Palace come back to me in a kind of mist. We were all in a curious state of mind, which cannot be understood by any one who has not experienced it. We were in a dream, a terrible

THE CATASTROPHE

and beautiful dream and, as one does in a dream, we performed our parts accurately, without wavering. It was not so much my reason which perceived what was happening, as my whole being, which felt and grasped instinctively that the great moment had come.

I was much disturbed by the delay in the arrival of the people and soldiers before the Duma, and when at last, as I was passing through Catherine Hall, some one called to me from the main entrance of the palace, saying, "The soldiers are coming!" I flew to a window to convince myself that it was actually so. I had no thought of what I would do next. I think it was just after 1 P.M. From the window I saw soldiers, surrounded by a throng of civilians, lining up on the opposite side of the street. They were forming their ranks rather undecidedly, evidently finding it difficult to proceed outside their normal surroundings and without the guidance of their regular officers. I gazed at them for a moment through the window and then, just as I was, in the black jacket which I wore during the entire Revolution, without hat or overcoat, I ran out through the main entrance to the soldiers for whom we had waited and wished so long. Behind me was a group of deputies. Startled attendants stood on the porch, and there was a sentinel at the entrance. I ran to the center gate that led from the garden into the street and welcomed the troops and the people in the name of the Duma and in my own behalf. They rushed towards me in confusion, surrounded me in a mass and listened.

Almost at the same moment Tcheidze, Skobelev and other deputies came up behind me at the palace gate. Tcheidze also spoke some words of greeting, and then I addressed the troops and asked them to follow me into the Duma, to replace the guard and take over

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

the defense of the building from the Czarist troops. The whole throng pushed after me towards the main entrance. Somehow the soldiers separated themselves from the throng and, drawing up in disciplined form, followed me. We proceeded with some anxiety to the guardroom, on the left side entrance of the Duma, not at all sure that we would not have to fight the regular watch on duty, of whose possible unfriendly sentiments I warned the soldiers. We went off to "take" the guardroom. However, it turned out that the guards were not there. They had left before we came. I explained to a noncommissioned officer where and how sentries should be placed and returned to the main hall of the Duma, which by this time was filled to capacity by deputies, soldiers and civilians. In the evening a detachment of troops from the Preobrajensk Regiment undertook the task of guarding the arrested ministers and dignitaries of the old régime who had meanwhile been brought to the Duma. The troops performed their task with excellent discipline and remarkable tact.

On my return from the guardroom I again stopped to address the throng which remained outside the entrance. The mood of the people, who had come from all parts of the city, was very significant. They evidently had not the least doubt that they were in the midst of a revolution. Boldly they raised the question as to how to deal with the representatives and supporters of the old régime, suggesting severe measures. My advice was asked and I said that those who were particularly dangerous should be arrested forthwith, but that under no circumstances should the people take the law into their own hands, and that bloodshed should be avoided. They asked who should be arrested and I named first Scheglovitoff, former min-

THE CATASTROPHE

ister of justice and president of the Imperial Council. I ordered Scheglovitoff brought directly to me. It developed that some men of the Preobrajensk or Volinsk regiments had already gone with some others, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, to seize Protopopoff, the Minister of the Interior. He had managed to get away in time, however. But everywhere in town dangerous men of the old régime were being arrested.

After 3 P.M. the Duma was unrecognizable. The building was filled with civilians and troops, principally privates. From every direction people were coming to us for advice and instructions. The Temporary Committee of the Duma, which had just been established, was compelled immediately to assume the functions of executive authority. At midnight, March thirteenth, there was no more wavering on the part of the committee. It became for the time being the sovereign power of Russia, and Rodzianko agreed to head it as such.

I think it was about 3 P.M. when some one had come to ask me about arranging quarters in the Tauride Palace for the Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, then just founded. With the consent of the Duma, the Soviet was given Room 13, the meeting place of the budget commission of the Duma. The Soviet then set to work organizing the Petrograd garrison and proletariat. At the same time Tcheidze and I signed a permit for the publication of the first revolutionary newspaper, *The Bulletin of the Duma Reporters*, for all the printers in the city were on strike and the capital, deprived of newspapers, had no proper idea of what was happening. I remember I laughed when a Duma reporter asked me to sign the permit.

"Why are you laughing, Alexander Feodorovitch?"

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

asked one of the reporters. "Don't you know what a great power you are now in Russia!" At the time I took this as a joke.

Later (about 4 P.M., I think), when the Temporary Committee was meeting in Rodzianko's room, some one came in to announce that Scheglovitoff had been brought in under arrest. The news made a great impression in the Duma, both on the public and the deputies. Scheglovitoff, the all-powerful Czarist grandee, under arrest! The deputies got quite excited about it. The Moderates pressed Rodzianko not to permit the arrest. "We must let him go," they insisted. "We cannot arrest the President of the Imperial Council in the very halls of the Duma. What about the immunity of members of legislative bodies?" They turned to me. I replied that I could not release Scheglovitoff. "What!" they cried with indignation. "You want to turn the Duma into a prison?" This was indeed a strong argument, but what could one do? To release Scheglovitoff would have meant handing him over to the mob to be lynched. Besides, it would have given rise to a profound distrust of the Duma among the masses. Such a step was quite impossible. It would have been sheer madness.

I went out to see Scheglovitoff and found him in charge of a hastily improvised guard, surrounded by a group of people. Rodzianko was already there together with a number of deputies. I saw Rodzianko greet Scheglovitoff amicably and invite him into his rooms as "our guest." I interposed myself between Rodzianko and Scheglovitoff and said to the former: "No, Michael Vladimirovitch, Mr. Scheglovitoff is not a guest here, and I refuse to have him released." Turning to the President of the Imperial Council I asked: "Are you Ivan Grigorievitch Scheglovitoff?"

THE CATASTROPHE

"Yes." "I must request you to follow me. You are a prisoner. Have no fear. I guarantee your safety.' Every one obeyed and fell back. Rodzianko and his friends, somewhat confused, returned to his rooms while I led Scheglovitoff to the ministerial chambers known as the Government Pavilion.

The Government Pavilion was a separate building consisting of several comfortable rooms, connected by a glass-roofed passage with the main hall of the Duma, the hall where the Duma held its sittings. These rooms were used by the ministers when they came to the Duma. The Pavilion being outside the Duma proper was under control of the government. It had its own staff of servants, independent of the Duma. The deputies had no unrestricted right of entry to it. By using it as a place of incarceration we avoided turning the Duma into a prison. The government leaders and dignitaries were thus imprisoned in their own apartments. Scheglovitoff was the first prisoner, but he was followed soon by a whole galaxy of shining lights of the old bureaucratic world. They were brought in on foot and in carriages from all parts of the capital, and they found temporary lodging in these comfortable rooms where so recently they had waited in majestic seclusion for their turns to appear before the Duma, which they so despised, and where they had so often cynically spoken of it as a "pack of troublesome chatterboxes."

By sundown, March thirteenth, all Petrograd was already in the hands of the revolutionary troops. The old government machinery had ceased to function. Some of the ministries and government buildings were already occupied by the revolutionists. Others, such as the office of the secret police, the police stations, the law courts, etc., were on fire. In the Duma we

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

had created a central authority to control the troops and head the revolt. At times the multitude seemed about to swamp the Duma. Then again it would recede and give us respite. The Tauride Palace groaned, shook and seemed about to collapse under the pressure of the mighty human wave. From the outside the palace looked more like an armed camp than a legislative institution. Boxes of ammunition, hand grenades, stacks of rifles and machine guns had been sent from all quarters and stored in the palace yard and garden. Every available corner was occupied by soldiers, although, alas, there were few officers among them.

During all those first days of the Revolution I did not go into the streets and so I never saw the city in insurrection. Only once, on the night of March fifteenth, I hurried home for a few hours before dawn. I saw patrols at street corners and excited groups of people who had evidently been up all night, the watch bivouacs around the Duma and the burning headquarters of the *gendarmérie* to which I had once been brought from prison for examination.

In those days my work did not take me outside the walls of the Tauride Palace. Here we were like the general staff of an army in battle. We did not see the battlefield nor hear the groans of the wounded and the dying. We saw everything through reports, telephone messages and eyewitness accounts. We did not see the details of the operations, but we had before us the whole picture of events. We tried to direct the movement to a definite goal, to give it form, and systematize the revolutionary forces.

Looking back, I can disentangle the events of the first hours of the upheaval and determine the time of most of the individual episodes. But at that time everything seemed to weld into one ecstasy of intense,

THE CATASTROPHE

continuous and uninterrupted action. Reports came to us in bewildering succession. They seemed to flow into our midst as if into a magic circle. Hundreds came to demand instructions and ask to be given work to do. They wanted attention, they gave advice, they got excited and shouted. Sometimes they raved or became ecstatic. We had to keep our heads, for we could not afford to lose a minute nor appear to lack confidence. We had to decide in a moment what to answer, what orders to issue, when to dissuade, where to send these soldiers or that armored car, what to do with certain troop detachments, and where to send reinforcements; how to find room for the hundreds under arrest, how to make use of the people who were ready for the revolutionary struggle and, finally, how to feed and house the thousands of people working at the Duma. There were innumerable minor questions and petty details to be settled. And at the same time we had to think of organizing our forces, of finding a program acceptable to all parties by devising compromises, of following the course of events outside of Petrograd, particularly at General Headquarters and around the Czar.

It was almost impossible to tackle the fundamental questions during the daytime in the chaos of men, reports and events. We had to wait for the night, when the wave ebbed and the halls and lobbies of the palace grew empty. As soon as silence and calm were restored, endless discussions and passionate, nerve-wracking disputes ensued in the rooms of the Temporary Committee of the Duma. There, in the silence of the night, we began to sketch the outlines of the New Russia.

Besides all this work, I had on my hands the Government Pavilion with its ever growing number of dignitaries. Order had to be established there and a

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

stern watch kept, so that the Revolution might not be disgraced by vengeful bloodshed. I had to be everywhere. I was summoned and sent for from all sides. As in a trance, regardless of day or night, now pushing through a wall of human beings, now passing through the silent twilight of the empty corridors, I rushed about the Duma. Sometimes I almost lost consciousness for fifteen or twenty minutes, until a glass of brandy was forced down my throat and I was made to drink a cup of black coffee. Sometimes one of my intimate friends would catch me on the run, or seize me in the midst of a conversation, and make me swallow something hastily. Every one who was at the center of these great events had much the same experience.

I shall never forget the atmosphere in the Tauride Palace in those tense, critical days. Every one was animated by the spirit of unity, fraternity, mutual confidence and self-sacrifice, welding all of us into a single fighting body. Afterwards, when the Revolution had conquered, when our victory had become secure, more and more among us turned out to be men with personal ambitions, men with an eye to the main chance, or mere adventurers. But during those first two days and the first night all of us at the Duma were running grave risks. If it took courage and determination to run to the Duma through the rifle and machine gun fire in the streets, much strength of mind was needed by those men who had spent their lives in the customs and traditions of old Russia to turn wholeheartedly to the Revolution. It must have cost them a great deal to break with their whole past and stand out against everything for which they had lived the day before and without which they thought the country could not endure. For they turned against the Czar,

THE CATASTROPHE

demanding his abdication and summoned and fraternized with the mutinous troops. This was very painful for them, and I saw clearly the profound suffering and genuine tears of those men who were burning all that they had worshiped, for the sake of the salvation of Russia.

I think it would be well for men of different views to do each other justice, and I feel obliged to say that men like Gutchkoff, Shulgin and Rodzianko showed the courage of true patriots and a genuine revolutionary spirit in those critical days. They really fought for the Revolution, and they probably felt things more intensely, suffered more anxiety for Russia and viewed with more pain the terrible situation that preceded the Revolution than many of the revolutionary proletariat who afterwards arrogated to themselves all the honor of and responsibility for the Revolution. These men felt more profoundly and suffered more because during the period preceding the Revolution they had known more about the affairs of state and what was going on in the army, at court and in the ministries, and had seen what others only surmised—the abyss opening before the country. I have no hesitation in repeating that they felt these things more profoundly than the men who afterwards claimed to have brought about the Revolution.

As a matter of fact the Petrograd Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies was not yet completely organized at this time, and while the Duma was acting as a national center for all Russia, the proletariat was only just beginning to form its organizations. The Temporary Committee of the Duma communicated with the Czar and the army, gave orders to the railways, sent out that first telegram about the events in Petrograd, which, like an electric current,

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

united all Russia with the revolutionary capital. The Temporary Committee of the Duma did all this without any special pressure from the "revolutionary democracy." It set the Revolution going simply because the time was ripe for it. We must remember, too, that information about the Duma proceedings constituted the first news of the Revolution that reached the army at the front and that the success of the upheaval was due, to a very large extent, to the fact that the whole army in the field, with nearly all its officers, at once recognized and welcomed the Revolution. The men who were on the fighting line (with the possible exception of the Baltic Fleet) realized more clearly than any one else that Russia stood on the brink of a catastrophe and it was with them that the authority of the Duma stood highest.

Those leaders of the Soviet who had suddenly risen to their positions simply because they had taken part in the revolution of 1905 perceived the dominating rôle of the Duma so clearly that they immediately decided that this 1917 Revolution was a "bourgeois" movement. They declared dogmatically that, according to all the rules of "scientific" socialism, the revolutionary democracy must not enter this bourgeois government. These would-be leaders were far from knowing the real state of affairs. Not only did they take it for granted that the bourgeois government would have monarchist tendencies, but they thought it was strong enough to put them into practice and, therefore, hastened to take what measures they could to prevent this. So, the leading members of the first Executive Committee of the Soviet quite seriously introduced the following amazing clause into the manifesto which they outlined for the new government:

"The government binds itself to abstain from all

THE CATASTROPHE

acts defining in advance the form of the future Russian government."

As far as I remember, the Temporary Committee of the Duma did not accept this clause and it did not appear in the final draft of the first manifesto of the Provisional Government. What scant power the Soviet leaders must have attributed to the revolutionary democracy, which they claimed to represent, since, instead of demanding the immediate proclamation of a republic in Russia, they made this feeble effort to limit the power of those whom they considered masters of the situation!

The events as viewed from our vantage point in the Duma showed that the Revolution was victorious, but we were not quite certain what forces the old government still may have had at its disposal. We did not even know where the government was, what it was doing and what strength it had outside of Petrograd. We heard that that same evening the government was to meet at the Maryinsky Palace. We sent a detachment of soldiers with armored cars to the palace to arrest the government, but our messengers returned about midnight saying that they had been fired upon by machine guns in Morsakaya street and that they had not been able to make their way to the palace. Afterwards it was rumored that the government was sitting at the Admiralty, under the protection of troops and artillery from Gatchina. There was a report that loyal troops were approaching from Finland, and we hastily organized a defense on the Viborg side of the capital, along the tracks of the Finland railway.

We knew nothing of what was being done at General Headquarters, where the Czar was. It developed that he had sent General Ivanoff, the hero of the first campaign in Galicia, with an army to take Petrograd

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

and restore order there. This detachment arrived at Tsarskoye Selo at dawn on March fourteenth, and there it simply melted away in the fire of the Revolution. The general himself, however, succeeded in making his escape in time.

It appeared necessary to organize a serious defense for emergencies and to take charge of the troops of the Petrograd garrison. But on the first day we had scarcely any officers or any one with sufficient technical experience at our disposal. I think it was only on the evening of March thirteenth or fourteenth that Gutchkoff began issuing orders. But on the evening of March twelfth the Temporary Committee of the Duma organized a military commission which at first consisted of civilians with some knowledge of military affairs, a sprinkling of officers and privates and myself. Later Engelhardt, a colonel of the General Staff and a conservative member of the Duma, was appointed head of the commission. By a strange irony of fate this military commission that was directing the struggle against Protopopoff's police was quartered in the same room which was so recently the abode of Protopopoff, who had worked and temporarily lived there as vice-president of the Duma, before his appointment as minister of the interior in 1916.

Our military difficulties were further complicated by the fact that the masses of soldiers at our disposal were almost entirely without officers in those critical days. I remember how impatiently all of us in the Duma awaited the arrival of officers and members of the higher command, for we realized that the breach between the men and the officers of the Petrograd garrison was a great misfortune for the army. On the evening of March twelfth the First Reserve Infantry Regiment marched up to the Duma. It was the first

THE CATASTROPHE

regiment to arrive with its personnel complete, headed by its colonel and officers. The bad effect produced on the entire army by the unfortunate and only too obvious enstrangement between the officers and soldiers of the Petrograd garrison will become more evident later in my narrative. One may say, with reasonable certainty, that if the officers in Petrograd had placed themselves at the head of the movement immediately, as did the officers at the front, the Russian Revolution would have escaped many calamities.

But in the first days of the Revolution the Petrograd officers were not to be seen. Nevertheless, we managed somehow to deal with the military questions before us, although we were quite aware that we could not resist any serious attack and that two or three well disciplined regiments would have sufficed to dispose of us. But during those days the old régime did not command a single soldier who would have fixed his bayonet against the people, against the Duma or the Soviet. In this lay our strength, the strength of our spirit and our authority. It rested upon the common will, common love and common hate.

The temporary absence of the officers made it easier for the Soviet to penetrate into the barracks. The Soviet leaders quickly grasped the advantage of subordinating to their influence the 150,000 men of the Petrograd garrison. One must do them justice and say that they made full and even excessive use of this advantage.

The Executive Committee of the Soviet formed its so-called military section on the night of March thirteenth. This military section soon established close contact with the garrison in all parts of the capital, and during the first two months of the Revolution, while Gutchkoff was war minister and Korniloff

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

military commander of the city, it competed successfully with the official military authorities.

On March twelfth, in the evening, the Temporary Committee of the Duma sent Bublikoff, a deputy, with a detachment of revolutionists to capture the central railway-telegraph station. This was a timely and very important move, which immediately gave the Duma control of the entire railway system and made it impossible to dispatch trains without the approval of Bublikoff, who had been appointed Duma commissioner in charge of communications. Bublikoff also telegraphed the first news of the Revolution to all parts of Russia, and it spread immediately throughout the whole country and the army. The railway men accepted the Revolution without hesitation and with great enthusiasm. At the same time, they showed excellent discipline and it was due to their efforts that military trains were kept going regularly and general traffic suffered no interruption.

In short, by the night of March thirteenth, we had made such great strides that a return to the past was no longer possible. A compromise or amicable solution of the conflict between the old régime and the people had already become out of the question. The Temporary Committee of the Duma was competing with the old government for supreme authority, although the Duma as a whole was slow to realize what had happened. It had not yet decided to recognize formally the decisive rupture between the people and the old régime. There were lingering hopes that the old government would finally realize the situation and call to power men who had the confidence of the people, etc. But as events succeeded each other with lightning rapidity it became impossible and intolerable to remain undecided any longer.

THE CATASTROPHE

All that night we argued and disputed in the room of the president of the Duma, and every piece of news, every fresh rumor was greedily seized upon. In the formation of the Soviet we perceived a most important development. In a short time another body might proclaim itself the supreme authority of the Revolution. The man who wavered longest was Rodzianko. We all tried to convince him and at last he asked us to give him time to think it over. It was just before midnight. After some deliberation Rodzianko returned to the Temporary Committee and declared that he was willing to remain president of the committee provided it assumed the functions of a provisional government until the formation of a new government. So that when the clock struck midnight on March thirteenth Russia already possessed the embryo of a new national state. It was a representative body, though chosen from a Duma elected mainly by the upper classes, and it based its authority on the will of the people, as far as this had been expressed through the limited electorate of the Duma.

The fourth Duma laid the foundations of the new power in Russia. This is an undeniable, historical fact and shows the strength of the mere idea of representative government. Of course it would have been a hundred times better for the Duma, and especially for the country, had the new national authority been born on the preceding afternoon at a solemn, official session of the Duma. But unfortunately most of the deputies had not, and could not have been expected to have, sufficient revolutionary audacity to take control of the march of events at once, and by strong and deliberate action create a single All-Russian center for the popular movement.

On the night of March thirteenth, after Rodzianko

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

had given his affirmative answer, we drew up a proclamation to the people announcing the formation of the new provisional authority. We also delegated certain deputies as commissars of the Duma, to take charge of all the ministries and central government offices.

The same evening the first session of the Soviet was held in Room 13. Of course, the representatives of the workmen and soldiers had been chosen more or less casually, as it was quite impossible to organize a regular election in a few hours. The Soviet elected a temporary executive committee, of which Tcheidze was president; Skobeleff and I were chosen vice-presidents. I heard of my election by chance, for I did not attend this meeting of the Soviet and I do not remember even looking in at the meeting for a moment. In fact, even after my election I rarely attended the Soviet meetings or those of its Executive Committee. From the first days of the Revolution my relations with the Soviet leaders were strained. They could not abide me, as I was compelled to fight continually against the academic, dogmatic socialism of the Soviet, which from the very beginning tried to thwart the normal development and sound forces of the Revolution. I speak here of the Executive Committee of the Soviet as it was constituted during the first weeks of the Revolution. Later, the personnel and conduct of the Executive Committee changed considerably for the better.

But I will deal with the Soviet later. For the present I simply record the definite creation of this second center of the Revolution, which was soon to swallow up the first. I repeat that the suicidal conduct of the Duma majority in refusing to take part officially as the Duma in the events comprising the outbreak of the Revolution, in submitting to the Czar's decree of dissolution on March twelfth, and turning its session

THE CATASTROPHE

into a private meeting (as it had done every time it had been prorogued during the War) threw away all chances of preserving a single center of authority in the Revolution.

On proclaiming itself the supreme administrative authority, the Temporary Committee of the Duma began to issue orders and instructions to the Petrograd garrison. But by what right? It could claim no better right than the Soviet, which soon also began issuing orders and instructions to the garrison. The Temporary Committee of the Duma acted as a private, self-appointed revolutionary organization.

So, two centers of authority, each of which elected its own executive committee, were established on the very first day of the Revolution (though I doubt whether the Soviet Executive Committee had much power), and this division finally led to the decay of all authority and to the anarchy of Bolshevism.

On the first night of the Revolution the city was lit up by the glow of fires. Inside the Duma there was dead silence and emptiness, and one could collect one's thoughts a little. Our minds were occupied chiefly with wondering what would be the result of the conflict between the Duma and the still living authority of Czarism. Only the day before Rodzianko had telegraphed to the Czar:

The situation is serious. There is anarchy in the capital. The government is paralyzed. General discontent is growing. There is desultory firing in the streets. One portion of the troops is firing on the other. It is absolutely necessary to appoint some one possessing the confidence of the country to form a new government. Delay will be fatal. I pray God that a share of the responsibility may not fall upon the Monarch.

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

A day later Rodzianko had adopted revolutionary methods and was heading the temporary central organ of the Revolution, while the representatives of the "revolutionary democracy" were proclaiming the Revolution in the Soviet and publishing the first appeal to the people to fight for a Constituent Assembly. Our minds could not keep pace with the events. They were bewildered and overwhelmed by the peculiar glowing atmosphere of intense popular emotion. And those who, in spite of everything, wished to keep to their ordinary way of thinking at this extraordinary time of mysterious revolutionary creation, those who hastened to build up in nice and well laid out designs their respective political schemes and systems in order to set themselves above the events and to direct their course—those people sometimes managed to look extremely silly. I have already mentioned how the wise men of the Left formulated a declaration intended to counteract the monarchist tendencies which by all the rules of revolutionary theory must be inherent in a bourgeois government. But they were not the only ones who made such miscalculations. On March twelfth, one of the wisest members of the Moderate Progressive Bloc in the Duma majority, when asked what would be the program of the new government, replied quickly and authoritatively: "Of course, its program will be the program of the Progressive Bloc." Moreover, on the morning of March fifteenth, Miliukoff proclaimed to the throng collected in the halls of the Tauride Palace:

"The power will pass to the Regent. The despot who has brought Russia to complete ruin will either abdicate or be deposed. The power will be transferred to the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch. Alexis will be the heir to the throne."

THE CATASTROPHE

He was interrupted by cries: "It is the old dynasty," etc. But he continued:

"In my opinion we ought to have a parliamentary, constitutional monarchy. Perhaps others are of different opinion, but if we discuss this point now instead of deciding it at once, civil war will break out in Russia and she will return to the régime that has just been destroyed."

But by the evening of March twelfth it had already become quite evident that any attempt to save the monarchy or the dynasty was doomed to failure. The monarchy was bound to be swept away in two or three hours. Many impractical plans were put forward and it was extremely trying to listen to the endless discussions of lifeless, academic programs. These plans were put forward by the representatives of the upper classes as well as by the revolutionary democracy. I did my best to avoid these meetings, not deliberately but because such interminable and impractical discussions have always been repugnant to my nature. Political programs rarely interested me at that time. I was absorbed entirely by the vast and mysterious development of events which was sweeping us along so swiftly and so inexorably. One felt that programs and discussions could neither speed nor prevent that which had come about.

The Revolution was not the product of mere human reason. It came from the depths of the soul and conscience of humanity. Indeed, all these programs and theories were shelved and forgotten even before the authors had had time to try them out, while the authors themselves followed a course precisely the opposite of that which they had advocated the day before. But how much time, energy and intelligence were wasted during those months of the Revolution in

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

discussing academic schemes and manifestoes and in working out formulæ to conciliate opposing views! These were the heritage of long centuries of autocracy, during which the Russian people had had no opportunity to acquire political acumen and the art of practical government. Neither the Left nor the Moderates nor the Right had any experience of government, with the possible exception of the bureaucrats. One must not blame them for this unhealthy tendency to settle everything by resolutions. They had learned to reason well, but they had never been able to try out their theories in practice. Much paper was wasted during the Revolution! Many decisions were taken, only to be forgotten the next day by those who had urged and defended them. It would be unjust to attribute this lack of efficiency to the revolutionary democracy alone, for it was common to the whole Russian intelligentsia.

The first night of the Revolution passed, but it seemed to us that all eternity had gone by. On the morning of March thirteenth, the military schools and almost all the Guard regiments with their officers came to express their allegiance to the Revolution. Reports arrived that the troops and the people in neighboring towns were joining the movement. It was becoming clear that the Revolution was approaching decisive victory. Rodzianko received telegrams from the commander-in-chief and the commanders at the front which dissipated all anxiety about the attitude of the army in the field. Tsarskoye Selo joined the movement the very same day that Nicholas II left General Headquarters for the imperial residence. In the midst of the anarchy in Petrograd newly founded organizations began to appear. Resistance to the revolutionaries diminished rapidly and, in fact, disappeared almost entirely. We were now concerned only with the possible

THE CATASTROPHE

opposition on the part of the old régime in other parts of the country. The events at Tsarskoye Selo, however, had foredoomed all such efforts to failure. We heard that General Ivanoff had begun his advance on Petrograd. For what object? With what forces? What relation had this enterprise to the departure of the Emperor from General Headquarters? We did not know as yet.

But such questions troubled us only at night, for all day long we lived in happy, feverish activity. We had to meet and welcome the various sections of the garrison as they arrived. As a rule the procedure was as follows:

An army unit—let us say the Semenoffsk Guard Regiment—came in. The soldiers poured in noisily and gayly, like a great wave, through the main entrance into the Duma, lining up along the walls of the long Catherine Hall. Then Rodzianko was sent for to greet them in the name of the Duma. He said what was expected of him. He spoke of the great joy of liberation, of the dawn of a new life and of the solemn, patriotic duty that lay before us at the front. He pointed out that it was essential to have confidence in the men in authority, to observe military discipline, etc. His last words were usually drowned in thunderous cheers. Then some one from the regiment, usually the officer in command, would reply. And there were more cheers and joyful shouting. Then the regiment would want to hear other speakers. Usually the soldiers asked for Miliukoff, Tcheidze or me. It was a great happiness to make these first speeches of freedom to a free people, to speak freely and openly for the first time to the army.

I remember particularly one incident. The Michailovsk Artillery School and several army units were

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

in Catherine Hall, while all the adjacent rooms and passages were thronged with soldiers and people. They called for me and lifted me on their shoulders in the center of the hall. I saw a sea of heads, of gleaming, enthusiastic faces. I felt as if we all had one emotion, one heart, one will. I felt that this throng was capable of great self-sacrifice, of great devotion. I tried to express this in my speech. I spoke of the free man that was born in every one of us in this hour of the new, free Russia; of the great deeds that lay before us and of the call that had come to every one of us to serve our country in complete sacrifice and without reserve. I said that a double service was required of them, that they must carry on both the War and the Revolution; that this was a difficult task, calling for all the energies of every man and of the entire nation. I spoke of the generations of heroic revolutionists who had died unflinchingly for the liberty of future generations. I pointed out that representatives of all classes had perished for this cause and that all classes must now trust each other. Again I called for generous, heroic sacrifices in the name of our motherland that was reborn.

Thousands of hands were raised and all swore to serve their country and the Revolution to the very end. It was indeed a new life that sprang up within the walls of the Duma. New fires of hope and aspiration were kindled and the masses were drawn together by mysterious bonds. We have lived through many beautiful and terrible events since then, but I can still feel the great soul of the people as I did in those days. I can feel this terrific force which may be led to perform great deeds or incited to horrible crimes. As a flower turns to the sun, so the newly awakened soul of the people longed for light and truth. The people

THE CATASTROPHE

followed us when we tried to raise them above material things to the light of high ideals. I hold, as I did then, what now seems to many an absurd faith: I believe in the spirit of the people, whose wholesome, creative forces will come out victorious in the end, vanquishing the deadly poison that has been poured into them during these long years, not, alas, by the Bolsheviki alone. There have been so many poisoners—the Bolsheviki are only more logical, more persistent, more daring and more shameless than the rest.

We had a great deal of trouble in those first days of the Revolution with the prisoners in the Government Pavilion, the ministers, dignitaries, bureaucrats, generals and police officials assembled there. Certain episodes come back to me. I recall the arrival of Goremykin, a small and very old man, who had twice been premier. It was morning; some one stopped me and told me of Goremykin's arrest. I went to Rodzianko's room, to which he had been taken. In a corner sat a very old gentleman, with exceedingly long whiskers. He wore a fur coat and looked like a gnome. Deputies, priests, peasants, officials stood around him. They could not take their eyes off the famous Goremykin with his chain of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle. The old man had found time when he got up to put it around his neck, over his old morning waistcoat. Goremykin's arrest made perhaps even more impression on the deputies than Scheglovitoff's the day before. The Moderates were alarmed, wondering whether it would not be better to release him. They were all interested to know how I would deal with this man who held the very high title of "privy councilor of the first class." I put to him the customary question: "Are you Ivan Loginovitch Goremykin?" "Yes," he answered. "In the name of the

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

revolutionary people I declare you under arrest," I said, and turning to those about me, I added: "Please call the guard." Two soldiers appeared. I placed one on each side of Goremykin. Some deputies anxious about the fate of his "highest excellency" surrounded the crestfallen and confused old man more closely, tried to enter into conversation with him and seemed to express their sympathy. I asked them to move away. At my request the old man got up, his chain jingling mournfully, and I led him to the Government Pavilion, amidst the respectful silence of the deputies.

I should mention that at this time many Duma deputies did not realize how deep were the wrath and indignation of the masses in Petrograd against the chiefs and representatives of the old régime. They failed to understand that only by arresting and showing a certain degree of severity to the former dignitaries could we keep the crowds from lynching them. I remember that in my absence the deputies, in the kindness of their hearts, released Makaroff, former minister of the interior, minister of justice and member of the Senate. While he had been minister of the interior, on April 17, 1912, there had been a massacre of workmen in the Lena goldfields in Siberia, which provoked the indignation of the whole of Russia. In accounting for this incident to the Duma, Makaroff had unwittingly uttered the hateful phrase, which became proverbial: "Thus it has been and thus it always will be."

It is not difficult to imagine what would have happened if such a minister had graciously been allowed to remain at large. What would have happened if the *agents-provocateurs* and demagogues who were already trying to excite the populace to rash and bloody acts

THE CATASTROPHE

had taken advantage of the news? This unwise and unjustifiable release took place in the evening. When I entered the study of the Duma president, Makaroff had just left it with the good wishes of the kind deputies. I demanded that I be told where I could find him and was informed that he had probably gone to an upper apartment in the Duma building because he was afraid to return home at night. I immediately took two soldiers and hurried upstairs to the apartment. I rang the bell. A lady opened the door and screamed with terror at the sight of the bayonets of my soldiers. I calmed her and asked: "Is Makaroff here?" She replied that he was, and I said: "Take me to him, please." The minister was sitting in a comfortable room—as far as I remember it was a dining room. I explained that his release was a misunderstanding, apologized for having to trouble him again and conducted him to the Pavilion.

Again, later in the evening on March thirteenth, I was passing along the corridor to the small entrance leading to the rooms of the Temporary Committee of the Duma. At the door of what had been Protopopoff's office some one approached me. He was uncouth and untidy, but his face was familiar. He called me "Your Excellency." There was a familiar ring in the voice. "I am coming to you of my own accord; do arrest me," was his next statement. I looked more closely and, behold, it was Protopopoff! It appeared he had been in hiding in the suburbs for two days and was trembling with terror. But when he learned that the prisoners at the Duma were being treated kindly and that I was in charge of them, he came to give himself up. At least, that was how he explained the matter to me. We were standing at the door of his former office, and no one had as yet taken notice of him. I

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

knew that if his arrival became known it would end badly for him. For this wretched man was perhaps more hated at that time than any other, not excluding the Czar himself. I said softly: "You have done quite well in coming, but be silent. Come along quickly and do not show yourself more than you can help." When the door of the Government Pavilion closed behind us, I drew a deep breath of relief.

I think it was on the evening of March fourteenth, while I was attending a meeting of the Military Commission, that some one pale and terrified ran up to me and said:

"Sukhomlinoff* is being brought along to the Duma. The soldiers are terribly excited. It looks as if they might tear him to pieces."

I ran out into the corridor. The throng was pressing forward, unable to restrain its wrath, muttering ominously. They were staring intently at the repulsive old man who had betrayed his country, and seemed ready to pounce upon him to tear him to pieces. I cannot recall the nightmare of this scene without horror. Sukhomlinoff was surrounded by a small guard, manifestly inadequate to protect him from the infuriated crowd. But I was determined there should be no bloodshed. I joined the guard and led it myself. We had to walk for several minutes through the ranks of the enraged soldiers. I had to use all the power of my will and all possible tact to restrain the raging human flood which was about to overflow all bounds. I thanked Heaven when we had passed through Catherine Hall. The narrow corridor that we still had to cross between Catherine Hall and the side door lead-

* Minister of war under the Czar's régime, condemned by a court for treason during the War.

THE CATASTROPHE

ing to the main meeting hall of the Duma was almost deserted, but in the semicircular hall near the door of the Government Pavilion there were more soldiers. It was there that we passed the most terrible moments.

Seeing that their prey was about to escape, the throng made a determined movement in our direction. I quickly covered Sukhomlinoff with my body. I was the last barrier that separated him from the pursuers. I shouted that I would not permit them to kill him, that I would not allow them to disgrace the Revolution in this way. Finally, I declared that they would lay hands on Sukhomlinoff only over my dead body. I stood thus, shielding the traitor, alone against the furious crowd. It was a terrible moment. But they began to hesitate and I won. Gradually the crowd receded. We succeeded in pushing Sukhomlinoff through the door that opened behind us. We shut it and barred the way with the bayonets of the guard. In the Pavilion the appearance of Sukhomlinoff aroused tremendous indignation among the arrested dignitaries. Not a single one of them would sit near him, and all showed their objection to being in the same room with him.

It was, indeed, very difficult to protect these prisoners from the fate that might have befallen them. At first they were terrified at what might become of them in this "accursed" Revolution, for they were thoroughly conscious of their guilt. Some of them, like Beletsky, Protopopoff and Beliayeff, the former minister of war, inspired repugnance by their cowardly conduct. Others, like Scheglovitoff, Makaroff and Bark, on the contrary, behaved with courage and dignity. The calmness and self-possession of Scheglovitoff especially struck me. All of them were, of course, prepared for the worst. But they soon saw that our

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

Revolution was not to be a parody of the autocracy, and they not only calmed themselves but accepted with complete confidence the assurance of myself and my associates that their lives were safe in our hands and that no harm would come to them.

People from the Right have blamed and are still condemning me for my leniency towards the Left, *i.e.*, towards the Bolsheviki. They forget that on the principle they put forward I should have been obliged to begin by applying terror not to the Left but to the Right, that I had not the right to shed the blood of the Bolsheviki unless I had first shed streams of blood in the early days and weeks of the Revolution, when I risked my authority and prestige with the masses by fighting against the demand that the Czar and all the members of the fallen dynasty and all its servants should be atrociously punished.

I remain a decided adversary of every form of terror. I shall never renounce this "weakness," this humaneness of our March Revolution. The real soul of the Russian people is one of mercy without hatred. This is the heritage of our Russian culture, which is deeply humane and tested by long suffering. Looking back upon the Decembrists, upon Vladimir Solovieff, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenieff, upon the noble, stubborn fight of the entire Russian intelligentsia against the henchmen and hangmen of Nicholas II, how could this Russian Revolution have begun with capital punishment, the characteristic habit of autocracy, by setting up "Her Majesty the Guillotine"?

It was with faith in the justice of our cause that we launched the Revolution and sought to create a new Russian commonwealth founded upon human love and tolerance. Some day our hopes will be realized, for in those days we all sowed seeds which will bear

THE CATASTROPHE

fruit. Just now our eyes are blinded by mists of blood, and people have apparently ceased to believe in the creative power of love, in the power of mercy and forgiveness, which alone foster the growth of national life and culture. People say now this humaneness was simply a sign of weakness of the revolutionary government, but as a matter of fact great determination and strength were needed to prevent and curb bloodshed, and to suppress in oneself and others the impulses of hatred and vengeance, which were cultivated by the centuries of autocracy.

The strength of our Russian Revolution lay precisely in the fact that it did triumph over its enemies, not by terror and bloodshed, but by mercy, love and justice, even if only for one day, for one hour. Perhaps I dreamt all this. Perhaps this Revolution never existed, except in my imagination. But it seemed to exist then. Now every one in Russia is dazed by blood. One hates the other to the extent of mutual annihilation. But this will pass, or if it does not pass, if the Russian people never come to understand the beauty and greatness of their first impulse, then we have been mistaken and our Revolution was not the prelude to the new life of which we all dreamt but the epilogue of the dying culture of a people about to vanish forever into history.

I remember how the first group of Czarist dignitaries was transferred from the Government Pavilion to the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. It was during the night of March sixteenth. We did not want to place these prisoners in the cells hallowed by the sufferings of many generations of Russian revolutionists, from the Decembrists and Novikoff to those of our own days. But the other prisons had been destroyed on March twelfth, so that the Fortress of SS. Peter

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

and Paul was the only place where these new and unexpected guests could be lodged with safety. The very walls of the old fortress must have shuddered to receive those who only yesterday were sending here the noblest and most courageous fighters for liberty, to suffer and to die.

The city was by no means calm when we found ourselves confronted with the necessity of removing the ministers of the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. It would have been highly unsafe to make the transfer during the day or with any publicity. I, and my immediate associates in charge of the Government Pavilion, determined, therefore, to make the transfer during the night, without even giving notice to the guard. All preparations had been completed by midnight and I myself notified the prisoners to make ready for departure, without telling them where they were going and why. These were Scheglovitoff, Sukhomlinoff, Kurloff, Protopopoff, Goremykin, Beletsky, Maklakoff and Beliaeff.

The secrecy of the removal and the hostile faces of the soldiers filled the dignitaries with terror. Some of them lost the last shreds of self-possession. Scheglovitoff was very calm, but inwardly probably he was comparing his sensations with those of his many victims, carried off in the same manner in the dead of night and driven from the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul or some other prison to the place of execution. Protopopoff could hardly keep on his feet and some one else—I think it was Beliaeff—implored me in a low voice to tell him at once whether he was being led away to execution.

I thought of Goremykin and went up to him. He had not yet donned his fur coat and I noticed that the chain of his order was no longer around his neck.

THE CATASTROPHE

"What has become of your order?" I asked him.

The old man became excited and confused like a schoolboy before his master, but he kept silent.

"Was it taken away from you?" I asked.

"No," he answered.

"Then, where is it?"

At last the poor man tremblingly unbuttoned his coat and waistcoat and began pulling out his chain from under his shirt. He knew that he would not be permitted to take superfluous things to prison but could not bear to part with his toy. I made an exception and allowed him to take his precious chain with him.

The removal of the ministers brought back to my mind my conversation with Scheglovitoff on March twelfth, immediately upon his arrival at the Government Pavilion. He was still quite alone and I suggested to him that if he had any love for his country, if he wanted to atone for the past or wished to perform one decent service for Russia at least at this hour, he should telephone to Tsarskoye Selo, or to any one else he deemed proper, to inform the authorities that further resistance was useless and urge them to surrender to the people. But this he firmly refused to do.

I will now return to the events of March thirteenth. I have already indicated that the arrival of the garrison troops, of all the Guards, including the Czar's own bodyguard, had strengthened the position of the Tauride Palace. The resistance of the police in the streets was diminishing, although frequent firing continued in the suburbs. This gave us no ground for anxiety, but our position in the provinces was still uncertain, particularly in Moscow, from which we had as yet received no news at all. The situation in general was not yet definite, and the movements and conduct of Nicholas II were still a riddle to us. Why had he left General

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

Headquarters for Tsarskoye Selo? I believe now that he departed for Tsarskoye without realizing the absolute hopelessness of the situation, hoping perhaps to placate the Duma with concessions, or he may have gone to see his family, to which he was devoted, for most of its members were ill at that time.

It did not seem so simple then, however. In any case, we were obliged to take action, for we could not permit the Czar to come to Tsarskoye Selo, so near the capital. If he could not or would not undertake to organize any resistance himself, there were others who might have sought to make use of him. The Temporary Committee of the Duma decided not to permit the Czar's train to proceed to Tsarskoye but to detain it on the way and negotiate with him en route. Every one realized that his abdication was essential and inevitable. Already at the beginning of the winter, plans for a coup d'état had been launched among the upper classes. Some of these plans were known in the army, and all of them involved the abdication of Nicholas II.

Our Commissar Bublikoff was keeping a close watch on the Czar's train. The shortest route from Mohileff to Tsarskoye Selo lies through Vitebsk and Dno, a trip of fourteen to sixteen hours. The Czar left Mohileff in the morning of March thirteenth. The Temporary Committee of the Duma ordered the train stopped at Dno. Time was passing. It was midnight. We had heard that the train was on the way to Pskoff, the Main Headquarters of the Northern Front. This meant that the Czar was intending to throw himself upon the army. I do not remember how many hours this cat-and-mouse game lasted, but the "mice" of yesterday showed considerable skill in catching their "cat." Finding the road barred at Dno, the Czar ordered the train to proceed to Bologoye, a junction

THE CATASTROPHE

point from which two roads were open, one to Moscow and the other to Petrograd. We ordered the road cut at Bologoye. For the first time the Czar and his suite found they could no longer go where they wished and felt the power that now lay in the hated Duma's hands.

From Bologoye the imperial train turned back to Dno, whence it proceeded to Pskoff. I do not remember whether the Czar's train arrived at Pskoff at dawn on March fourteenth or fifteenth. I think it was on the fourteenth, although I recall vaguely that during that day Rodzianko made some efforts to get in touch by telephone with the Czar's train. But perhaps it was the Czar who tried to get into communication with Rodzianko from Pskoff. However, this is not a point of great importance, for by the morning of March fifteenth General Roussky, commander of the Northern Front, had not only received a telegram from Rodzianko declaring, in the name of the Duma, that the Czar must abdicate, but he had already discussed this question by telephone with General Alexeyeff at General Headquarters. The army did not oppose the Czar's abdication. In spite of the formal proposal that the Czar abdicate in favor of his heir and that the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, the Czar's brother, become regent, the fate of the dynasty was already sealed. I do not mean to suggest that Rodzianko and the other members of the Temporary Committee were deliberately deceiving Nicholas II when they asked him to abdicate on these terms. On the contrary, I believe that on the morning of March fourteenth they were sincerely convinced that it would be possible to make common cause with Michael Alexandrovitch for the salvation of Russia. But they were deceiving themselves. I, for one, did not believe for a moment that this plan could be realized, and so I did

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

not go to the trouble of raising any objections for the time being. The logic of events showed itself stronger than all plans and suggestions.

I wish to point out here that all measures taken to intercept the Czar's train and to communicate with the front for the purpose of forcing his abdication were taken without any pressure from the Soviet, although by the evening of March thirteenth the Soviet already felt it had sufficient strength to begin functioning as an authoritative organization, on a basis of equality with the Temporary Committee of the Duma. The military section of the Soviet was already competing with the Military Commission of the Duma, issuing various independent orders. In answer to Colonel Engelhardt's orders to the garrison, it issued the famous "Order No. 1," which was written on the night of March fourteenth. I shall discuss this order in detail later but, for the present, I merely note the time it was issued. I must point out, also, that this order was applicable only to the Petrograd garrison and it had neither more nor less authority than the orders of Colonel Engelhardt. I emphasize these facts because "Order No. 1" has been used as a strong weapon of attack against the Provisional Government and myself in particular. Without entering at this juncture into a discussion of its contents, I should like to say once and for all that neither the Provisional Government (which had not yet been formed) nor I had anything whatever to do with this order. It may be noted as a matter of interest that I personally read the text of this order for the first time in London, in December, 1918. This order was one of the effects of the peculiar state of disintegration and lack of authority in the Petrograd garrison, and by no means the cause of it, as has been charged.

THE CATASTROPHE

On March thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth the lack of officers made the situation very difficult. The soldier mass, released from the bonds of discipline and daily routine, became willful and unmanageable. It was further aroused by innumerable rumors about alleged counter-revolutionary plots by officers (most of whom had gone into hiding) and on the part of the high command of the army. Agitators contributed their share to inciting the rank and file against the officers. I must say, however, that all the responsible elements, from Rodzianko and the Executive Committee of the Duma to Tcheidze and the Executive Committee of the Soviet, strove hard to put an end to the discords in the Petrograd garrison and to save the officers from being lynched. Tcheidze, Skobelev and other members of their Executive Committee repeatedly appeared before the soldiers to counteract the false rumors concerning the counter-revolutionary tendencies of the officers and to urge the need for unity and confidence. Tcheidze and I addressed a communication to the garrison, pointing out that a certain proclamation against the officers issued ostensibly by the leaders of the Social-Democratic and Social-Revolutionary parties was a deliberate forgery, perpetrated by *agents-provocateurs*. The officers of the Petrograd garrison soon adopted a resolution expressing their allegiance to the Revolution and to the Duma. The resolution was countersigned by Milinkoff, Karauloff and myself. The resolution was widely distributed, and I concluded my first speech as minister of justice by calling upon the soldiers to obey their officers and submit to discipline.

In short, to say that any member of the government was spreading discord between the officers and soldiers is either downright calumny or a complete misunder-

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

standing of the facts. Colonel Engelhardt, Gutchkoff, Karauloff, Rodzianko, Tcheidze and I, and all who had to deal with the Petrograd garrison in the first days of the Revolution, were obliged by the peculiar circumstances in Petrograd to speak not about the officers in general but only about the officers who were faithful to the people and the Revolution. It was not we but the situation which compelled the distinction. Soon all these misunderstandings disappeared, but they left scars which could not be erased.

From the very first days of the Revolution, *agents-provocateurs*, German agents and liberated criminals began to stir up feeling against us. To understand the danger and effectiveness of this agitation, it should be remembered that the police department alone had several thousand agents and agitators, spies and informers operating among the workers, the troops and the intelligentsia in Petrograd. And there was a considerable number of enemy agents. These gentry were hard at work spreading anarchy and disorder. They printed and distributed incitements to massacre, they sowed hatred, accentuated misunderstandings and spread rumors which despite their falsity had no inconsiderable effect on the population. I was informed (I think it was on March fourteenth) that bales of proclamations of the most preposterous character, calling for massacre and anarchy, and purporting to be signed by the Social-Democratic party, had been brought to the quarters of the Soviet. Having previously observed a number of suspicious individuals lurking about the Soviet quarters I went there and actually found a quantity of the most disgraceful proclamations, in good print and on good paper, which had obviously come from the police. Of course, I immediately confiscated them, but we could not intercept all such documents in

THE CATASTROPHE

time, as there were too many scoundrels at work distributing them.

At the same time "reliable" information was spread about a revolution in Germany, together with an appeal to hold out a fraternal hand to the insurgent German proletariat. A revolution in Berlin in March, 1917! How many simple-minded folk accepted this news in good faith! Even honest people went about town in automobiles, distributing announcements of this mythical revolution. The masses believed this rumor because the hearts of many thousands were already aglow with the faith that the Russian Revolution would kindle the fires of fraternity in the hearts of all the working people of the world, and that by common impulse the workmen and peasants of all belligerent countries would put a stop to the fratricidal war.

It would be a great mistake to attribute this pacifist movement entirely to the ignorance of some and the treachery of others. For there was much candid faith in the international solidarity of the working classes, which was highly desirable but had no basis in reality. The imagination of the Russian socialist, whether he be workman or intellectual, created a composite "French-British-German socialist workman" who did not exist anywhere in sober, practical, materialistic Europe. This imaginary European proletariat was simply an idealized image in the likeness of the ordinary Russian workman and intellectual, *i.e.*, of a hungry dreamer who does not possess a corner on earth where he can lay his head. But in reality there is a great deal of satiety and of comfort at the disposal of the plain working man in Western Europe. It may seem paradoxical but it is true: the Russian proletariat would hate and fight the bourgeois and the intellectual at home a hundred times less if he knew that the whole of

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

Europe, the whole of nature, does not contain such socialists and such socialism as he and his creed. But he did not know this, and so he burned with fanatical faith in the immediate realization of the socialist millennium throughout the world, until the flames of his belief destroyed him and his unfortunate country. All the tragic phenomena which developed in Russia after the great Revolution were not the expression of the primitive forces of barbarism, as some distinguished foreigners and even many of the Russian "cultured" classes believe, but were in reality far more complex in their material and spiritual causes.

On the morning of March twelfth, Rodzianko had sent his second wire to Nicholas II. It contained the following words: "Steps must be taken immediately, for by to-morrow it may be too late." This prophecy was accurately fulfilled. On the night of March thirteenth it became quite clear that it was too late to save the dynasty and that the Romanoff family had disappeared forever from Russian history.

By the night of March fourteenth there was but one tragic problem confronting us: how to save Russia from the rapidly spreading disintegration and anarchy.

In the face of this situation and of the task confronting the nation at the front it was imperative to give the country a new government. It could not afford to drift along without a government even for an hour, and yet three days had already passed without a supreme authority, the government of Prince Golitzin and Protopopoff having become paralyzed by the morning of March eleventh. It was impossible to delay any longer, for the process of disintegration was proceeding with meteoric speed, threatening to destroy the whole administrative machine. With the administrative apparatus wrecked no government would have been able

THE CATASTROPHE

to cope with the situation. What happened came very close indeed to such destruction. One longed to speed the necessary action, to force quick decisions. The task demanded creative work instead of discussions. It called for risk instead of calculation. One had the painful feeling that every minute of delay, indecision and unnecessary calculation was an irretrievable loss. Every minute in those days was worth months and years of ordinary time and yet many minutes were wasted. Mere human reason was overwhelmed by the whirlwind, and the march of events left it behind at an ever widening distance.

However, by the morning of March fourteenth the main features of the new government and its program had already been sketched in bold outline, and thereupon the representatives of the upper classes and the bourgeoisie began to parley with the democracy, as represented by the Executive Committee of the Soviet. I cannot give an account of these *pourparlers*, as I took little part in them. On the rare occasions when I was present I sat quite passive and hardly listened. A provisional government was projected, composed almost entirely of "bourgeois" ministers, with two portfolios reserved for the Soviet. The Temporary Committee of the Duma proposed Tcheidze as minister of labor and me as minister of justice. This rather one-sided arrangement was brought forward because of the still prevalent illusion that for some time to come the Duma majority and the governing upper classes in general would retain power and authority in the country.

The invitation of the Temporary Committee of the Duma to send two representatives as members of the projected government was discussed by the Executive Committee of the Soviet in the course of the day, March fourteenth. It was on this occasion that the

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

resolution I have already briefly mentioned was carried, declaring that the representatives of the revolutionary democracy "could not take office in the Provisional Government because the government and the whole Revolution were bourgeois." What reasons did the scribes and pharisees of socialism bring forward to persuade the Executive Committee to this decision? I do not know. But when I heard of it, it seemed to me to be utterly absurd, for it was obvious that all the real power lay in the hands of the people themselves. It seemed clear to me that the Revolution was a revolution of all the people, of the whole nation, and that the questions of the governing authority had to be solved in a broad spirit, on a national scale and in a spirit of constructive statesmanship.

On March fourteenth I was confronted by a painful question, having to choose between leaving the Soviet and remaining in the government or remaining in the Soviet and refusing to take part in the government. Both alternatives seemed impossible to me. The dilemma buried itself deep in my mind and the decision ripened somehow by itself, for there was no time or opportunity to think over the problem in the turmoil of the day.

On the same day the general situation again gave cause for anxiety. Obscure reports were in circulation about some catastrophe at Kronstadt. In Petrograd hooligans attacked the officers' hotel (Astoria), broke into the rooms, molested women, and committed depredations. At the same time news of the arrival of General Ivanoff and his troops at Tsarskoye Selo spread rapidly throughout the capital and in the Duma, and although there was no cause for fear on this score the throng in the Duma was obviously nervous and agitated by the uncertainty of the situation.

THE CATASTROPHE

At about eleven o'clock in the morning the Grand Dukes came to pledge allegiance to the Duma, including Cyril, the present "pretender" to the throne, Nicholas Michaelovitch and others. The troops continued to fraternize with the people. The firing slackened and in spite of isolated acts of violence some sort of order had been restored. A city militia and even the office of a revolutionary prefect were created. People were working hard to restore discipline in the garrison, and Gutchkoff, who next day became minister of war, took part in the work.

Meanwhile the Revolution in its sweep had spread to the provinces. Good news came from Moscow, where, as one eyewitness reported, "everything went like clockwork." Moscow said good-by to the past gladly and unitedly. I remember how on my arrival in Moscow, on March twentieth, I felt as if I could not drink in enough of the pure, fresh air of Russia, which Petrograd, infected with intrigue and treachery, needed so badly.

News kept pouring in from all parts of Russia, from towns big and small, telling of the advance of the Revolution. The movement was already nation-wide. There was, therefore, all the more reason to make haste in organizing the new government and clearing up the remnants of the old one. By the evening of March fourteenth we were hard at work composing the manifesto of the Provisional Government, which on the morrow was to take up the reins of government. We were concerned only with setting up the executive departments. The question of the supreme executive authority was not discussed by the Temporary Committee, for the majority of the Committee regarded it as settled that the Grand Duke Michael would assume the regency during the minority of Alexis. How-

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

ever, on the night of March fifteenth all, without exception, had agreed that the Constituent Assembly was "to determine the form of government and the constitution of the country," so that even the Constitutional Monarchists, who on the morning of March sixteenth still favored a regency, had already agreed that the people alone were supreme and had the sole right of determining the future Russian constitution. Thus the monarchy was discarded and by unanimous consent relegated to the archives of history.

The contents of the first declaration of the Provisional Government was the subject of heated discussion. Agreement almost broke down completely over some points. There was much passionate dispute between the representatives of the Temporary Committee and those of the Executive Committee of the Soviet on the point concerning the rights of soldiers. As far as I can remember the Soviet's original draft of this point was altered entirely. The original draft of the declaration or, at least, the fundamental points and clauses, were drawn up, if I remember aright, by the Executive Committee of the Soviet. Every item provoked sharp disagreement, but not a word was said about the War and its aims. It is indeed remarkable that this subject, which only a fortnight later became the most painful and, one may say, the fatal question of the Revolution, was not alluded to by a single word in the working out of the program of the Provisional Government. On this question of the War and its aims the Provisional Government was left absolutely free, taking upon itself no formal obligations, being at liberty to act as it wished and proclaim whatever war aims it deemed proper and necessary. And yet later no other question led to such furious attacks on the Provisional Government from the Left, which declared

THE CATASTROPHE

that precisely on this point the government had somehow betrayed the Revolution and violated its pledges.

What may perhaps seem even more incredible is that this inaugural manifesto of the Provisional Government did not refer in a single line or word to the social and economic grievances of the working classes. In fact, this initial declaration of the Provisional Government was altogether so general in its character that I was quite indifferent to its contents. The Provisional Government, as first constituted, not only fulfilled the obligations it had taken upon itself but went far beyond this declaration, unfolding a wide and comprehensive program of social reform. But that did not deter people from assailing it, accusing it of having failed to live up to its obligations and inspiring the masses with deep mistrust of the government created by the Revolution.

Does not the absence of a social program from the declaration of the Provisional Government show that the "leaders" of the Soviet were quite accidental to the Revolution? Does it not show how they misunderstood the nature of the profound upheaval, of this turning point in the life of the Russian people? I have no doubt there will be many ingenious efforts to explain away the fact that the Soviet draft of the government's declaration contained no reference to the War and the economic needs of the workers and peasants. Some people pretend this silence was deliberate, that these questions were deliberately ignored for tactical reasons, so as not to frighten the upper classes at the beginning of the Revolution. Very well, let them find whatever consolation they can from such specious argument!

The cabinet list of the Provisional Government was completed by the night of March fifteenth. I cannot

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

say what considerations influenced the Temporary Committee of the Duma in choosing the ministers, for I did not take part in the consultations on this question. I do not remember when Prince Lvoff, the first premier of the Provisional Government, appeared among us for the first time, but I think he arrived by the evening of March fourteenth. I know that Rodzianko's candidacy for the premiership found no support among the influential deputies. I know also that in Duma circles it was considered imperative that I be included in the Provisional Government. I learned later that some of the ministerial candidates made my inclusion in the government a condition of their acceptance. No one seemed to think that the decision of the Executive Committee of the Soviet against participation in the government would necessarily prevent my taking office.

This night of March fifteenth was perhaps the most painfully difficult period I had yet experienced. I was on the verge of a breakdown. The superhuman tension of the previous two days had begun to tell on me. I was often on the point of fainting and sometimes I would fall into a semiconscious state for ten or fifteen minutes. But it was up to me to find a way out of the difficult situation, which seemed to be impossible of solution. I must say that even in Soviet circles it was considered by some necessary and inevitable that I should enter the Provisional Government. Some Soviet members even sought to persuade me to leave the Soviet in order to do so. But this was an important question for me. It was essential that the Provisional Government include a formal representative of the second center of the Revolution, in order that it might have the character and authority of a popular government.

THE CATASTROPHE

It mattered not how many seats in the cabinet were allotted to the respective parties, for even if the revolutionary democracy had only one representative his influence was bound to be determined by the weight of public opinion behind him. I was, therefore, not in the least embarrassed at finding myself alone in the cabinet, when Tcheidze had refused categorically to enter the government. I felt that if the masses were to be left to the haphazard leadership of the Soviet and had no official representative in the Provisional Government, serious danger and trouble were ahead. I could not permit this to come to pass. Moreover, I felt that without a hold on the Left, without direct contact with the masses, the Provisional Government was foredoomed to failure. Yet, the immediate and essential need of the Revolution was a strong government, able to organize the dissolving structure of the country.

It is very difficult at this time to express in words all these considerations, which did not come to me at that time one by one through the process of reasoning, but forced themselves upon me painfully and instinctively in a mass. I was face to face with an excruciating dilemma. My friends urged me to have done with the Soviet and enter the government. I felt this was impossible, but on the other hand it was equally impossible to make the Soviet leaders change their minds.

Unable to bear the thought of this difficulty any longer, I determined, before dawn, to go home. I do not know why, but I could no longer listen to all these discussions regarding the question settled irrevocably by the Executive Committee of the Soviet.

How strange it was now to come out into the street which I had so often traversed on my way to the Duma, followed by spies of the Czarist secret police! How strange it was to pass the sentinels, to see the sinister

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

flames from the building of the district *gendarmérie*, to which the people had set fire. It was all so unreal, so fantastic.

Only on my return home did I perceive fully the significance of what had happened. I broke down and fell into a faint. It is difficult to describe the state of mind through which I was passing during all these days. One's very nerves, one's entire organism felt extraordinarily quick and vibrant. One lived under what seemed unendurable tension. Yet one felt strong enough to vanquish even death. It is worth living to experience such ecstasy.

For two or three hours I lay in a semiconscious, semidelirious state. Then, suddenly, I sprang up, for the answer to that question which I seemed to have forgotten had come to me at last. I determined to telephone immediately my acceptance of a post in the Provisional Government and to fight it out later not with the Executive Committee but with the Soviet itself. Let the Soviet decide between the Executive Committee and myself! Strangely enough, my final decision to ignore the ruling of the Executive Committee was not prompted by the reasons mentioned above but simply by the sudden thought of the prisoners in the Government Pavilion and elsewhere. Could any one else, could any bourgeois minister of justice save them from lynching and keep the Revolution undefiled by shameful bloodshed? I felt sure that, under the circumstances, no one but myself could do this. I telephoned to the Temporary Committee and announced my decision. I think it was Miliukoff who answered the telephone. He seemed pleased, and congratulated me heartily. My weariness disappeared. I began immediately to lay plans for the organization of my department, to pick my nearest associates. I sent for

THE CATASTROPHE

Zarudny, who was to be my assistant minister, etc. One might have thought that I was in no doubt as to whether the Soviet would approve my decision. To tell the truth, I was not.

I returned to the Duma, where every one had meanwhile learned of my decision and was waiting to see how my conflict with the Executive Committee of the Soviet would be settled. I proceeded at once to the Executive Committee and found nothing but stern faces and great anger. A plenary session of the entire Soviet was already in progress. I said I would go there and announce my decision immediately. "No, no, no!" was the advice of some. "Do not go. They will attack you and tear you to pieces. Give us time to prepare them beforehand."

"I myself will go and tell them," I replied.

In the adjoining large hall I heard Stekloff making his report on the *pourparlers* with the Temporary Committee of the Duma on the organization of the government. When he had finished, the chairman (Tcheidze) was told that I was waiting to appear before the Soviet, and he granted me the floor.

I climbed on to a table and launched upon my speech. I had hardly begun when I realized that I was winning. I only needed to look at this crowd, to watch the reaction of their eyes and faces to realize that they were with me. I declared that I appeared before the Soviet as minister of justice in the Provisional Government, that it had been impossible for me to await the decision of the members of the Soviet, and that I must now ask for their vote of confidence. I spoke of the program of the Provisional Government, saying that it was to the interests of Russia and of the working class that the revolutionary democracy be represented in the government, so that the government might be in close

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

and constant touch with the will of the people, etc. I no longer remember the details of my address, but I recall that nearly every sentence was punctuated by the acclamation of the audience.

On descending from the table I was lifted on the shoulders of the Soviet delegates and carried across the Duma to the very door of the Temporary Committee's room. I entered it not only as minister of justice but also as vice-chairman of the Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies and the formal representative of the working class. I led the way in the revolt against the absurd veto of the Executive Committee, but so many others followed suit that very soon a whole coalition had been established. But in the midst of the ovations accorded me by the Soviet members, in the unbounded enthusiasm of the throng, I had already observed the faces of the angry leaders, foreboding vengeance. The fight had begun, the battle against me, against my influence and my authority with the masses. This battle was waged obstinately, systematically, unscrupulously.

Incidentally, the same day, the first conference of the Social-Revolutionary party also gave its approval of my inclusion in the Provisional Government, as did the members of the Labor party, with whom I had been intimately associated during my career in the fourth Duma.

By ten o'clock, March fifteenth, the Provisional Government was definitely formed.

By the evening of March fifteenth the manifesto of the Provisional Government was made public. The Provisional Government became, until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the only sovereign power in the country, and all the subsequent changes and appointments in the Provisional Government were made

THE CATASTROPHE

by coöption, the Provisional Government itself choosing new ministers.

On the morning of March fifteenth, Miliukoff, in an address before the throng in Catherine Hall, concerning the composition of the Provisional Government, declared that the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch would become regent and that we had decided to establish a constitutional monarchy in Russia. On the very same morning and almost at the same hour the Emperor Nicholas II, at Pskoff, was drawing up a manifesto appointing a new government. Both Miliukoff's declaration and the Czar's manifesto were quite useless under the circumstances. The Czar, however, understood soon that it was no longer a question of changing the cabinet and, by the evening of the same day, before the arrival of the Duma delegation dispatched to demand his abdication, he decided to abdicate for himself and for his son. Miliukoff, on the other hand, defying the iron logic of events, affirmed over and over again, up to the last moment, that it was possible and necessary to establish a regency under the Grand Duke Michael.

Miliukoff's declaration aroused the ire of all the democratic elements in the Tauride Palace. The Executive Committee hurriedly called a special meeting, at which I was subjected to hostile cross-examination. I refused to be drawn into a dispute and merely replied:

"Yes, that is the plan, but it will never be carried into realization. It is impossible and there is no reason to be alarmed. I have not been consulted about the regency and I took no part in the discussion of it. As a last resort, I can ask the government to choose between abandoning this plan and accepting my resignation."

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

This question of a regency did not trouble me in the least, but it was difficult to transmit my own confidence to others.

The Executive Committee launched its own measures against the project of the regency. It wanted to send its own delegation to Pskoff, together with Gutchkoff and Shulgin, who were leaving that day, or, failing that, to prevent our delegates from getting a train. But it all came out right in the end.

The delegation of the Temporary Committee of the Duma, consisting of Gutchkoff and Shulgin, a conservative deputy, left for Pskoff at about 4 P.M., to demand the Czar's abdication. On their arrival they found everything already settled and in a manner contrary to their expectations. The Czar had abdicated not only for himself but also for his son, naming his brother, Michael Alexandrovitch, his successor. At the same time Nicholas appointed the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholayevitch (who had filled the post in the early part of the War) his successor as commander-in-chief of the Russian armies.

We learned of all this only on the night of March sixteenth, but in the meantime, while we were waiting for news from Gutchkoff and Shulgin, there were many things to be attended to. I made arrangements for removing the ex-ministers to the SS. Peter and Paul Fortress and appeared for the first time in my capacity as minister of justice before the Council of the Petrograd Bar. I wanted to salute the members of my own profession, in which I had learned to fight for right and liberty under law. In spite of the autocracy, the Bar was the only independent state organization, for which the autocracy and the Czar himself hated it. I wanted to tell the members of my profession, which had played so great a part in the struggle for the

THE CATASTROPHE

liberation of Russia, of my projected reforms in the Ministry of Justice and to enlist their support.

By evening we succeeded in restoring normal telegraph communication between the capital and the provinces. There was a special telegraph office in the Duma. As soon as the apparatus was restored I sent out my first orders as minister of justice. The first wire instructed all public prosecutors throughout the country to visit immediately all prisons, to liberate all political prisoners and transmit to them the greetings of the new revolutionary government. The second wire went to Siberia, ordering that Catherine Breshkovsky, "grandmother of the Russian Revolution," be immediately released from exile and conveyed with all due honors to Petrograd. I sent similar wires ordering the release of the five Social-Democratic members of the fourth Duma, who had been condemned to exile in 1915.

Meanwhile a grave situation developed at Helsingfors. A massacre of officers and the destruction of the fleet were expected at any moment. I was hurriedly summoned to the Admiralty, where I spoke by long distance telephone with the representative of all the naval crews. In response to my pleas this man promised to use all his efforts and the influence of his associates to calm the crews. The massacre was averted. The same evening a delegation of all Duma parties left for Helsingfors to restore discipline. For a time we had no more trouble at the naval base. The disturbances did not end without tragedy, however, for on March seventeenth, Admiral Nepenin, a gentleman and an excellent officer, was killed in Helsingfors. He was killed by a civilian whose identity was never discovered.

The affair at Kronstadt, to which I have already al-

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

luded, and which threatened the destruction of the entire Baltic Fleet, took place on March fourteenth. The news of these riots arrived somewhat late. Several scores of people were killed, including thirty-nine officers. Admiral Viren, the Commander-in-Chief at Kronstadt, was literally torn to pieces. About five hundred persons, including more than two hundred officers, were arrested by the soldiers and sailors, put into prison and subjected to humiliating treatment. The notorious Kronstadt chamber of horrors is the gloomiest page of the Revolution.

At last, night ended this hectic day. The members of the Provisional Government gradually threw off the anxieties of the day and met to talk over more fundamental questions. We were waiting impatiently for news from Gutchkoff and Shulgin. It was becoming clear to every one that it was too late to think of a regency, that it would be almost impossible to transfer power to such a government and that any attempt to do so would lead to grave consequences.

In those days the opinions and attitudes of men were adapting themselves rapidly to the changing situation. I learned in private conversations with members of the Provisional Government and of the Temporary Committee of the Duma that they were prepared for news that the regency was doomed and that they were ready to accept this fact with equanimity. Miliukoff alone (Gutchkoff being absent) failed to comprehend the changed circumstances. Every one felt we were approaching the decisive moment.

The night of March sixteenth remains unforgettable in my memory. That night brought the members of the Provisional Government close together and made them understand each other (at least that was how I felt) better than would have been possible through

THE CATASTROPHE

months of intimate association. At this critical moment each one acted and spoke only according to his conscience. They revealed themselves to each other and established that mutual confidence, those imperceptible bonds between soul and soul, without which it would have been quite impossible to bear the burden of government at this most acute crisis in the history of the nation. The night of March sixteenth made it clear that the Provisional Government, as first constituted, would be a strong, compact nucleus and that the great majority would work in complete solidarity, abandoning once and for all class, party and personal tastes and sympathies.

I think it was about three o'clock in the morning, or at any rate very late, when the long expected communication from Gutchkoff and Shulgin arrived. "Abdication has taken place, but in favor of Michael Alexandrovitch, who is already proclaimed Emperor," read the message. We could not understand it. What had happened? Who had inspired this move? Who was backing the new Emperor? What had our envoys done about it? Michael as Emperor! It was impossible, preposterous!

The first problem before us was to prevent this news from becoming known to the country and in the army. I think it was Rodzianko who rushed to the direct telephone line at the War Ministry to communicate with General Alexeyeff at General Headquarters. Other urgent measures were taken. Then we began to discuss the situation. Michael Alexandrovitch was in Petrograd, so that the question could be decided one way or the other by morning. In any case, we had to settle the problem immediately, for the country could not any longer be kept in this condition of uncertainty and anxiety. Either we must take the oath of loyalty

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

to the new Emperor or we must compel him also to abdicate, and that immediately.

The decision of Nicholas II had really cut the Gordian knot. Every one felt with great relief that once the direct and rightful succession to the throne was broken, the immediate question of the dynasty was settled. Fate had decided that it was to leave the stage at least until the Constituent Assembly had spoken. It became evident immediately upon the opening of our discussion that a majority in the Provisional Government would be in favor of the abdication of Michael Alexandrovitch and of the assumption of supreme power by the Provisional Government. These men were not confirmed republicans seeking a convenient pretext to get rid of the monarchy. Most of them had not been republicans up to the last hour. Not theories but life, not their personal preferences but the force of circumstances, not trivial considerations but a sense of duty brought them gradually and after painful hesitation to this truly patriotic decision. Even Rodzianko understood at once that Michael Alexandrovitch could not possibly become Emperor at that moment.

But Miliukoff still refused to admit this and Shingarioff gave him half-hearted support. The night hours passed in long, fervid dispute, for Miliukoff defended his position with tremendous perseverance and tenacity. He seemed to misunderstand the situation completely. He thought we were all faint-hearted and were losing our heads. It seemed to him, as he said next day to the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, that we had all "fallen under the influence of the mob" and lost control of ourselves. He simply could not understand that the monarchists had perhaps even more reason than the republicans for opposing the

THE CATASTROPHE

proclamation of Michael Alexandrovitch as Emperor at that time. It would have been absurd under the circumstances and could not have lasted more than a few days, and perhaps even a few hours.

We continued our argument with Miliukoff until close to the approach of dawn. We did not know how much Michael Alexandrovitch knew of what had happened. At any rate, it was clear we had to warn him and prevent whatever steps he was planning to take until we had come to a decision.

The Grand Duke was living with friends in a private apartment at 12 Millionnaya street. We looked up the telephone number and early in the morning, shortly before dawn, I rang up. There was an immediate reply. As I had surmised, the household, excited by the developments, had not been to bed all night.

"Who is speaking?" I asked.

It was the aide-de-camp of his Royal Highness.

I revealed my identity and asked the aide-de-camp to inform the Grand Duke that the Provisional Government would come to consult with him within a few hours, requesting him in the meanwhile to take no decision.

The aide-de-camp promised to transmit my message at once.

It was still quite early when we finally decided to go to the Grand Duke, without waiting for the return of Gutchkoff and Shulgin, who were delayed at some point on their return from Pskoff to Petrograd. We had decided that the Grand Duke must abdicate, transferring the supreme power to the Provisional Government until such time as the Constituent Assembly should finally settle the form of government. Miliukoff declared that he would immediately leave the Provisional Government unless he were permitted to state the case

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

of the minority before the Grand Duke. We agreed to this.

At about ten o'clock in the morning we drove unguarded, in an automobile, to 12 Millionnaya street, accompanied by ovations and cheers from the populace. We were met by the aide-de-camp, who showed us into a drawing-room. The Grand Duke entered almost immediately and seemed much perturbed. We shook hands and exchanged courtesies. There was an awkward pause. Then Prince Lvoff and Rodzianko laid the opinion of the majority of the Provisional Government before the Grand Duke. The latter was extremely excited and restless. He would ask the speakers to repeat certain things and would repeat single words to himself. Then Miliukoff's turn came. He launched upon a veritable lecture. He spoke coldly and calmly. He continued for more than an hour, apparently in the hope that Gutchkoff and Shulgin might turn up to support him. Just as he was about to conclude, Gutchkoff and Shulgin came in, and we called a short recess.

We told them what was going on and they gave us the details of what had happened at Pskoff. After some consideration, Gutchkoff decided that he must support Miliukoff, declaring that should Michael Alexandrovitch side with the majority of the Provisional Government he, Gutchkoff, would not remain in it. Finally the conference with the Grand Duke was resumed. Gutchkoff spoke, but in a manner quite different from Miliukoff's. He spoke clearly and briefly. The Grand Duke seemed to grow more weary and impatient. When Gutchkoff had finished, the Grand Duke suddenly declared that he would like to consult privately with two of us and then think the matter over by himself before making his final decision. I

THE CATASTROPHE

thought it was all over now, fearing he would ask for Miliukoff and Gutchkoff. But he said: "I should like to speak with Prince Lvoff and Michael Vladimirovitch Rodzianko." A weight fell from my mind, as I thought to myself: "If he wants to speak with those two it means that he has already decided to abdicate."

Rodzianko objected, saying that we had agreed to discuss the matter collectively and that he did not think it proper to permit private consultations. He looked questioningly at me, however, as if seeking my permission. I declared that we trusted one another and that we could not refuse to allow the Grand Duke to consult with those in whom he had most confidence, before deciding on a matter of such extreme importance. "I think we cannot very well decline the Grand Duke's request," was my final statement.

The Grand Duke, Prince Lvoff and Rodzianko retired, and we remained behind. We tried to persuade Gutchkoff not to leave the Provisional Government for a few days, in the event of the Grand Duke's abdication, until we should find a substitute for him. As a matter of fact he remained for good and apparently came to the conclusion that it had become quite impossible for the Romanoffs to take any further part in Russian history.

Finally, Prince Lvoff and Rodzianko returned. They were followed soon by the Grand Duke, who announced that he had determined not to take upon himself the burdens of government and asked us to draft the form of abdication.

"Your Royal Highness," I said, "you have acted nobly and like a patriot. I assume the obligation of making this known and to defend you."

We shook hands. From that moment we were on good terms. True, we met only once afterwards,

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

on the night of the Czar's departure for Tobolsk, but we knew all about each other through our aides-de-camp, and I occasionally helped the Grand Duke, trying to make his life easier under the new conditions.

Following the Grand Duke's declaration, Rodzianko and most of the ministers left, but Prince Lvoff, Shulgin and I remained to draft the act of abdication. It read as follows:

Inspired, in common with the whole people, by the belief that the welfare of our country must be set above everything else, I have taken the firm decision to assume the supreme power only if and when our great people, having elected by universal suffrage a Constituent Assembly to determine the form of government and lay down the fundamental law of the new Russian State, invest me with such power.

Calling upon them the blessing of God, I therefore request all the citizens of the Russian Empire to submit to the Provisional Government, established and invested with full authority by the Duma, until such time as the Constituent Assembly, elected within the shortest possible time by universal, direct, equal and secret suffrage, shall manifest the will of the people by deciding upon the new form of government.

(Signed) MICHAEL ALEXANDROVITCH
Petrograd, March 16, 1917.

The abdication of Nicholas II and that of Michael Alexandrovitch were published simultaneously, and we thus succeeded in settling the question of the dynasty quickly and without further complications. These acts of abdication marked the close of the most difficult and most inspiring period of the Revolution. The Czarism was definitely superseded by a new revolutionary

THE CATASTROPHE

power. Amidst the chaos appeared the outline of a new state—the Provisional Government—around which as a central point the new order developed. The first act in the drama of the Revolution—the death of the old and the birth of a new, popular government—lasted one hundred hours.

When one recalls what Russia was on the evening of March sixteenth, one feels that some divine spirit swept our country from end to end, leaving not one stone upon another of the old régime. One realizes that it was beyond the power of human reason to direct these events, which marked the turning point in the destiny of the Russian people. One can almost see the huge edifice of the old régime, built on the blood and tears of millions, crumble and fall into dust. One can almost hear the noise of its fall and the groans of those who perished with it. One almost feels again one's own struggle against suffocation in the débris and dust of that fall, which seemed to fill the universe.

Small human creatures try to measure with their tiny foot rules this immense upheaval, which was made possible only by divine grace, by the breath of fate itself. They try to prove, with the satisfied air of experts, that everything would have happened differently if so and so had acted thus and not otherwise, that everything would have been perfect if some one else had not been half an hour late in making up his mind. Perhaps everything would have been different if the Duma had found courage to act in its official capacity and to place itself as a recognized, parliamentary body at the head of the movement on the morning of March twelfth. Perhaps this or that mistake might have been averted if in those first days of the Revolution the Soviet had not been guided by men

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

like Stekloff, Sukhanoff, Bonch-Bruyevitch, Sokoloff, Tcheidze, etc. Perhaps Russia would have been saved from the calamity which overtook her eight months later if some one else had been in Kerensky's place, or if Kerensky had never existed. But it is easy to prophesy after the event!

No one wanted a revolution of the kind we have had. No one expected it or wanted it to turn out as it did. No one wanted a revolution accompanied by blood and the tumult of anarchy. The increasingly chaotic condition of Russia between March twelfth and sixteenth was brought into some kind of order by a great, nation-wide impulse of love for the motherland, by an intense devotion to the welfare of the country. The credit for this is due largely to the Duma and to the upper classes generally, who acted conscientiously for the good of the whole nation, as they understood it. History will recognize their merit in this. But the working classes, too, regardless of all their mistakes and of the crimes of isolated individuals, devoted all their revolutionary ardor to organizing themselves and converting a formless mass of humanity into an ordered revolutionary body. They, too, acted in accordance with their conscience and worked for the welfare of Russia as they understood it.

Who would have thought that the fourth Duma, representing the aristocracy and the middle classes, could rise at last above all considerations of class to such great heights of patriotic devotion? Its members were able to do this because they felt that they represented the whole country. It was this idea which inspired them and made them look beyond the needs and interests of their own class to those of the entire commonwealth. For the mere idea of representative government implies an institution which, in its very essence,

THE CATASTROPHE

is consecrated to the welfare of the whole people. It is true that whatever class has the upper hand is apt to use its power to further its own aims, but where it is vigorous and endowed with creative force its rule may be an advantage to the country as a whole. Moreover, every kind of government considers itself acting for the common good and believes that its rule is best for the country. Even the autocracy used to affirm its right to govern by alluding repeatedly to the traditional formula: "Regarding the welfare of our subjects," etc. At times of peril and upheaval this intention of acting for the common good becomes the leading inspiration of all public-spirited men and especially of such institutions as can lay claim to represent, even if only partially, the interests of the nation. Even a totally reactionary class government will sometimes act for the good of the whole people.

The fourth Duma, which consisted mainly of government servants, of men belonging to a past era of Russian statesmanship, was transfigured at the moment of its death by such an impulse to save the country, and passed it on to the new Russia, to a more democratic generation. The Provisional Government, which contained the new and regenerated elements, carried on the same idea of governing the people as a whole and was for long months the only real national institution in the general disintegration and decay of the old political and social world, until it, too, was swallowed by the advancing chaos. Then, even the symbol of unity disappeared and it seemed as if Russia had utterly fallen to pieces. But the fire of devotion to the commonwealth, which once shone so brightly, cannot be wholly extinguished. Deep down in the heart of the nation it still flickers and some day it will flare up again and shine with an undying light.

DAYS THAT ENDED RUSSIAN MONARCHY

In judging the career of the Provisional Government one should remember that it had to undertake the guidance of a state practically devoid of the machinery of government. Even the army came to it without leaders, for the authority of the superior officers vanished as quickly as that of the central and local administrations. It inherited nothing from the autocracy but a terrible war, an acute food shortage, a paralyzed transportation system, an empty treasury and a population in a state of furious discontent and anarchic disintegration. One thing alone enabled it to govern—faith in the good sense, the conscience and the creative forces of the people. It may have been folly to undertake to govern under such conditions, but it would have been criminal to refuse, to consider only oneself and to stand aloof.

In one hundred hours, hours of continuous anxiety and rapture, the old government, which had been destroying Russia, was wiped off the face of the earth. At the same time, however, the forces that had fought together against the common enemy and worked together for the creation of new forms of government began to divide. Some ranged themselves on the side of the new government, others on the side of the Soviet. But many returned to their private affairs and merely began to grumble at everything that was being done.

The new ministers entered their ministries on March sixteenth, and on the following day the Provisional Government left the Tauride Palace for good. For a few days we held our meetings in the council room of the Ministry of the Interior. After that, until July, we had quarters in the Maryinsky Palace, where the Czar's government and the State Council had formerly met.

THE CATASTROPHE

I left the Tauride Palace with a heavy heart. Here I had struggled for five years, as a member of the Duma, against the Czarist régime, and here I had lived through the few hours of revolutionary creation which were worth years of ordinary life. It was difficult to break, perhaps forever, with all its associations.

I have tried to describe the great collapse and the swift unfolding of events as we saw them within the walls of the Tauride Palace and as I myself took part in them. For the moment I have ignored other features of the situation. But, as I have already indicated, time did not exist for us then, so that in attempting to follow the sequence of days and hours in reconstructing the events in chronological order I have probably made mistakes. In order to understand the tension of those hours one must keep in mind that we had to deal with all the kaleidoscopic developments at once, so that the separate events seemed interwoven into one.

But what enthusiasm, what faith, what devotion we found among the thousands who crowded the Tauride Palace! How ~~quickly~~ everything was organized! How many threw themselves wholly into the common cause! How many were ready to live and die together! Those innumerable delegations, processions, greetings, those bright, shining faces, those outbursts of delight and faith seemed to prove to us all that the people had found themselves at last, that they had cast off the accursed yoke and were advancing joyfully, in festal garments, towards the new day that was already dawning. A mighty living impulse, a divine spirit, a transfiguring ecstasy descended upon the land.

It is in such moments that people really live.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE THE CRASH

THE months immediately preceding the outbreak of the Great War found Russia seething with revolutionary sentiment.

Political leaders who kept in constant, active contact with all elements of the population realized that Russia stood on the eve of a new upheaval, and were preparing for it. With a group of friends I spent the spring and summer of 1914 in traveling from one end of Russia to the other, organizing and marshaling everywhere the political and social forces of the country for the coming joint offensive of all bourgeois liberal, proletarian and peasant parties and organizations against Czarism, and for the establishment of a democratic parliamentary régime.

I was firmly convinced that the revolutionary movement would break out openly before very long. Enormous mass meetings, attended by many thousands, conspiratory gatherings in the provincial cities, and the passive attitude of the Czarist authorities towards the frank expression of the people's will at my mass meetings all evidenced a deep psychological crisis, of the kind that always precedes the final act of an advancing revolutionary movement and a radical change in the supreme political authority of a nation.

I remember well the arrival of the dispatch announcing Austria's ultimatum to Serbia. I was in Samara, a big political and commercial center on the

THE CATASTROPHE

Volga. It was late in the evening and I had just come from a great mass meeting. The city was throbbing with political excitement. Next morning I boarded a steamer to go to Saratoff, the leading city of my Duma constituency, where preparations had been made for another rally. With me were a group of political co-workers and friends who had come to see us off. We were exchanging latest impressions and expressing amazement at the mounting fever heat of the political situation in the country, the tensivity of which was surprising even to us. Suddenly we perceived a group of newsboys running towards the gangplank, crying: "Austria's Ultimatum to Serbia!" In that moment our mood underwent a decided change; in the cry of the newsboys we sensed at once the first breath of the historic hurricane.

The entire international situation in Europe left no doubt that war was inevitable. Bidding good-by to our local friends, we boarded the steamer. Nothing seemed altered in the serene expanse of the mighty river, the boiling summer sun, the merry passengers disporting themselves on deck. Without talking to any one and concealing our troubled spirit, our little group of political workers from the Duma hurriedly called a "council of war." It was decided to cancel our propaganda tour at once, to halt the internal political struggle and to return immediately to Petrograd. We realized that it was necessary to concentrate all the strength of the country upon the organization of the national defense, as it was quite clear that the government, enmeshed in Rasputin's web, would not be able to handle the task of the War and would bring Russia to defeat and ruin.

Quite intuitively I perceived that Czarism would not survive the War and that on the fields of battle

BEFORE THE CRASH

would Russia's liberty be born. It was thus that, as the representative of the Labor party in the Duma, I later formulated this thought at the Duma's historic session upon the occasion of the official declaration of war.

On the steamer I expressed the same thought to none other than the sister of Nicolai Lenin. The explanation of my conversation with the sister of the chieftain of Bolshevism is perhaps not without interest. The Ulianoff (Lenin) and Kerensky families had lived in Simbirsk, on the Volga. My father had been principal of the two local high schools, one for boys and the other for girls. Lenin's father, Ulianoff (the future head of the so-called Soviet government adopted the name of Lenin as a pseudonym), had been inspector of elementary schools in the province of Simbirsk. All his children had been educated in the local high schools, under my father's supervision. After old Ulianoff's death, my father, by virtue of his close association with the Ulianoff family, had become the family's guardian. In the reminiscences of my childhood I have retained no impressions of Nicolai Lenin and his brothers and sisters, as there was a wide difference in our ages. It was quite natural, however, that meeting Lenin's sister accidentally on a river steamboat I should have entered into conversation with her. After exchanging a few reminiscences of our childhood days, the conversation turned upon Lenin himself, who had been living for many years as a political exile in Western Europe.

"But don't worry," I said. "You will soon see him again. There will be war and it will open to him the road to Russia."

My prophecy, half serious and half in jest, was realized. Alas, to Russia's sorrow!

I have set down these lines so that my readers may

THE CATASTROPHE

realize the tense and complex internal situation under which Russia entered the War. In order that Russia's war drama may be understood, it is necessary to keep in mind that the War did not provoke, but merely postponed temporarily, the revolutionary movement which had been gathering increasing momentum with inexorable stubbornness.

For the sake of the national defense against an enemy splendidly armed and organized, the deep, patriotic instinct of the people dictated to them the duty of halting the inner political struggle against Czarism. The people's urge for national unity and their desire to lay aside all internal conflicts for the time being were indeed remarkable. The entire nation presented a united front against the external foe.

At the moment of the outbreak of the Great War, history presented to Russian absolutism what was perhaps the only chance it ever had to gain an understanding of the people and to make peace with them in the name of a common love for Russia, by uniting around the government all the live, decent and honest political forces of the country. But the government deliberately threw away this only chance, which, had it been taken advantage of, would have saved Russia from dissolution and ruin. The government's reply to the patriotic outburst of the people was to redouble the force and pressure of the reaction. To save Russia, the Russian people had to fight on two fronts: on the military front, almost unarmed and unequipped, they had to resist a powerful enemy armed to the teeth, while internally they had to defend themselves against the intrigues, corruption and inefficiency of Rasputin's minions, eager to retain their power and quite unconcerned about the fate of the country. The preservation of absolutism and the cause of successful resistance

BEFORE THE CRASH

to the enemy stood in tragic contradiction to one another.

Russia's national consciousness was confronted with a problem of tremendous difficulty, a problem which, as future events demonstrated, was insoluble. It was necessary to remove from power those who were destroying Russia, and at the same time to protect the army and the entire administrative apparatus of the state from perturbations which, in time of war, might prove fatal.

I am quite convinced that but for the War the Revolution would have come not later than the spring of 1915, perhaps even at the end of 1914. The War interrupted the crusade for the liberty and salvation of Russia, and the nation—under a régime already doomed to destruction and under the leadership of men like Rasputin, Sukhomlinoff and their ilk—was obliged to fight an enemy excellently equipped and organized.

In other respects, also, Russia was differently situated from the other belligerent powers. She came into the War unprepared and was quite unable to make up for her lack of preparedness during the course of the War. With the outbreak of the War she was obliged to reorganize her economic and financial structure from top to bottom. This reorganization was necessitated by the blockade that encircled Russia and by the prohibition of the sale of vodka, which had been not only the chief source of state revenue, but one of the chief means of promoting trade between town and country, between producer and consumer. Much has been said about the blockade of Germany as an instrument of her defeat, but few realize that Russia, least equipped of all the great powers technically and industrially, suffered even more than Ger-

THE CATASTROPHE

many from the isolation imposed upon her by the War. Germany was cut off from the world but she was able to maintain close contact with the nations associated with her. Russia was cut off even from her allies. The lack of direct communication made the transport of ammunition, machinery and equipment, in any appreciable quantities, impossible. It was barely possible to send limited and inadequate shipments through Sweden and by way of the Murmansk Railroad, which was opened only in the autumn of 1916 and never worked well. What little could be sent through Vladivostok, which was thousands of miles from the seat of war, was a negligible fraction of what Russia needed.

The world is quite familiar with the effects of the Allied blockade on Germany, so that I hardly need emphasize the workings of this terrible weapon with regard to Russia. In order to realize what it means for a country at war to be cut off from the whole world, one need only imagine what would have happened to France if her coasts had been inaccessible to the supplies of men and material which came to her in unlimited quantities from all corners of the earth.

"One can compare Russia to a house, the doors and windows of which are hermetically sealed and which can be penetrated only by means of its chimneys and water pipes," said the representatives of the Inter-Allied Council on their visit to Petrograd in February, 1917.

The second factor in the upheaval in Russia's economic life was the prohibition of the sale of vodka on the very first day of the War. I do not mean to imply that the state merely lost one-third of its revenue. To make the population sober and increase its productivity and individual incomes is worth the loss of a billion to

BEFORE THE CRASH

the state. But when the peasants stopped drinking they began to eat. The consumption of bread increased from fourteen to twenty-one or more pouds* per capita. Meat, butter and eggs were consumed by the producers in unheard-of quantities. When they could no longer spend their profits on vodka, the peasants not only began to eat the produce they had been accustomed to sell, but they started buying household necessities and even luxuries. Very soon, however, there was nothing left for them to buy, for the supply of goods in the towns was not equal to the requirements of a well-to-do and sober peasantry, being adequate only to the needs of a poor and drunken class of consumers. It was quite impossible during the War to equalize supply and demand. On the contrary, the supply actually decreased when factories producing commodities for the internal trade were turned exclusively to the production of war and military material. Nor was it possible to import goods. When the villagers found that they could spend their money neither on vodka nor on household goods they stopped selling produce. After hoarding their money for some time (the amount of currency held in the villages increased* by six billion rubles in the first years of the War) they found that the value of the money had depreciated. Arguing on the simple business principle that it was better to hoard grain than depreciating and useless money, they determined to keep their grain. To prevent seizure by the government, they buried it in pits. I remember how, as early as in 1915, the Budget Commission of the Duma was racking its brain on how to extract grain or money from the peasants.

* *Poud*, variant of *pood*; a Russian weight equal to forty pounds Russian or slightly more than thirty-six pounds avoirdupois.

THE CATASTROPHE

Once mobilized, the army absorbed a large proportion of the country's food supply. It consumed as much meat and butter as the entire population did before the War. Before the War Russia exported from 400,000,000 to 600,000,000 pouds of cereals annually, and in the first year of the War the government purchased 300,000,000 pouds for the army alone. In 1916 the army consumed 1,000,000,000 pouds of cereals, which was only 200,000,000 pouds less than Russia had provided for her home and foreign markets before the War.

The needs of the army and the oversupply in the villages brought about an acute crisis in the "granary of Europe"—a crisis which soon developed into a catastrophe. The sobriety and prosperity of the peasant class upset the trade of the entire country and resulted in a large shortage of supplies. Economic anarchy ensued.

But there were also other factors in the general economic upheaval. The import of coal ceased almost entirely and there was a shortage of fuel for the arms and munition factories and for the railways. The Petrograd district, the main center of the metallurgical industry, suffered most because before the War it had depended almost entirely on foreign coal. Not only did the foreign coal disappear but the output of Russia's mines also diminished, owing to the improvident mobilization of miners, the lack of mining machinery and equipment, the presence of poorly trained and underfed labor and the frequency of sporadic, anarchic strikes.

In short, the economic condition of Russia during the War was in itself sufficient to produce a catastrophe. Only the wisest possible utilization of the country's resources, the most careful and economical distribution

BEFORE THE CRASH

of commodities and of the means of production could have made possible the solution of the nation's grave economic and financial problems. The entire industrial and political life of the country should have been re-organized from the very beginning of the War so as to create a real coordination of all the vital forces. But instead of a competent government, Russia had at her head Rasputin, supported by a clique of criminals, feeble dotards, incompetents and greedy adventurers. This government merely utilized the War and the general patriotic spirit animating the country as an opportunity for the destruction of all the independent institutions of national life. The War became a pretext for men like N. Maklakoff, Sukhomlinoff and others for the suppression of the hated movement of opposition and revolution, which had the support of fully ninety-five per cent of the population. The chieftains of Czarism launched upon a veritable orgy of arrogance and violence. All labor organizations and the entire labor press of Petrograd were immediately suppressed. Hundreds of thousands of "disloyal" citizens were sent to Siberia. Poles, Jews, Finns and other non-Russian nationalities were persecuted. Every form of independent initiative, however patriotic, was severely discountenanced. The government seemed to be bent on killing all the spontaneous life and activity of the country and to carry on the War without it. Yet the War called for sustained, heroic effort by the entire nation. This was perhaps even more necessary in the rear than at the front, for the unprecedented struggle was rather a war of endurance than of swift, decisive strokes.

In those tragic days of the War we revolutionists were branded as Utopians for trying to seize upon the patriotic sentiments and good sense of the people

THE CATASTROPHE

as a means of accomplishing Russia's emancipation, but it was far more naïve on the part of our critics to believe that a government of Rasputins, Goremykins and Sukhomlinoffs could carry on the War even for a day without imperiling the country. Yet at the beginning of the War the upper classes as a whole and all the government parties in the Duma believed in the power of the government to carry on the struggle, ceasing all opposition and leaving a free hand for eighteen months to the incompetents and traitors. While the government was committing its blunders and crimes, the upper classes remained blind to every ominous sign of impending catastrophe, repeating automatically the absurd declaration that "during the War the opposition must cease to oppose." The Russia of Rasputin tried to imitate the *union sacrée* of the parliamentary governments of France and England and she paid dearly for the effort.

Up to the debacle in Galicia, in the spring of 1915, Russia silently permitted herself to be sacrificed by the old régime. But if silence was excusable in the man in the street, who was kept in ignorance by an iron censorship and lulled into a false sense of security by recollections of the victories of 1914, it was criminal in the men at the head of affairs who knew well what was going on.

Later the Duma majority began to assail the old régime and continued this criticism in the case of the Provisional Government, blaming it for the subsequent war disasters. But it showed the most culpable and most frivolous neglect of duty when it took no steps to avert these calamities at a time when it had the power and the prestige to do so. It saw the high command destroying the army, the ministers undermining the economic life of the country, provoking infuriated

BEFORE THE CRASH

discontent among the people, stifling the popular patriotic impulse of the first months of the War and freely sowing the seeds of hatred among the subject nationalities of Russia—and yet it did nothing. There were, indeed, a few men who did not permit themselves to be led astray by the *union sacrée* of France and England. These men tried to warn the people of the approaching calamity. They protested against the criminally irresponsible government and endeavored to bring the pressure of public opinion to bear upon it. In their anxiety they even tried to fight the government immediately upon the outbreak of the War, to save the country from inevitable defeat and anarchy, but in vain, for no one paid any heed to them.

This was how Gutchkoff described the situation before the conference of army delegates, held May 12-14, 1917:

When the War began, I, like many other people, was filled with anxiety and alarm. We felt the catastrophe approaching and we knew that there would be no security for the country unless the high command were changed and the system of supplying the army completely reorganized. The debacle of 1915 justified our anxiety. We demanded the dismissal of the commander-in-chief and his staff and other drastic reforms. But we did not succeed in having anything done. On my visit to the front in August, 1914, after viewing the shattered remnants of our two armies defeated at Soldau and studying the system of organization of supplies, it already then became clear to me that we were hopelessly involved in disaster. Neither the government nor the legislative bodies believed me. They merely called my attention to our victories in the south, in the Carpathians. I, who had been far from being a

THE CATASTROPHE

man of advanced views, became a revolutionist in 1915, for I became firmly convinced that the autocracy was leading us to defeat which would have tragic consequences at home, and that only the end of the old régime could save the country.

At a time when Gutchkoff, a conservative who had resolutely opposed the Revolution of 1905, but a man of practical intelligence who knew how to read the signs of the times, had already become a revolutionist, most of the Octobrist and Cadet leaders, after two years of inaction, were barely beginning to utter vague criticisms, in the hope of influencing Khvostoff, Maklakoff, Goremykin and their like. But already in the autumn of 1914 we "dreamers and Utopians" of the Left were demanding a serious program of political and economic reforms to deal with the problems of the War. We foretold Russia's inevitable shortage of the elementary necessities of life and pointed out what would be the result of the abolition of the sale of vodka. Like Gutchkoff, whose eyes were opened in 1915, we repeated again and again from the rostrum of the Duma that the old régime would bring Russia to defeat and catastrophe. In January, 1915, I pointed out to the Budget Committee of the Duma that the economic disintegration of the country was inevitable unless measures were taken immediately to deal with the problems of production and distribution, particularly in the rural districts.

The majority of the committee considered my suggestions altogether heretical, although a year later it began to put such measures into effect. In an address before the Duma I declared to the Czar's ministers: "If you have any conscience, if there is any feeling of patriotism left within you, resign!" The majority

BEFORE THE CRASH

maintained a disgraceful silence, contemplating calmly the destructive activities of the government. My voice was a voice crying in the wilderness. I was regarded as a defeatist for proclaiming my fear and anxiety for the nation. In 1914 and 1915 it was the fashion to condemn all those as defeatists, pro-Germans, dreamers and doctrinaires who, foreseeing the approaching catastrophe and sensing the abyss opening up before Russia, affirmed that it was vain to think of victory while Rasputin was in power. We were severely reproached for breaking the "political solidarity" of the country and told to stop the insolent persistence of our criticism. But those who could not or would not face the truth and who shirked the duty of fighting against the forces of disintegration were really the men who unconsciously laid the foundations of Russia's inevitable ruin.

At the very beginning of the War, when the Duma was preparing for the historic session of August eighth, Rodzianko sought my opinion, among others, as to what proposals he was to lay before the Czar. I advised him to ask the Czar to grant an immediate political amnesty, to restore Finland's constitution, to proclaim autonomy for Poland, to put a stop to political persecution, to grant civil equality and civil liberties. Of course Rodzianko did not take my advice. I made the same suggestions to the leaders of the Progressive parties, but they curtly upbraided me for my youthful impetuosity and pointed out that even in England the parliamentary opposition had ceased to oppose the government with the outbreak of the War. What *naïveté!* The British parties rallying around a national, democratic government compared with the Duma majority sorrowfully submitting to the incompetent and criminal Czarist government! The practical poli-

THE CATASTROPHE

ticians of England who rallied round the government acted from patriotic impulse and made the government pay for their support by conceding what they deemed necessary for the national welfare. Our "practical" politicians not only failed to perceive the nation's peril and fight for essential reforms, but gave the government a free hand in its diabolical policy of national destruction.

All that our wise statesmen accomplished by their naïve policy was to cut their own throats. Not only the government officials, from whom such folly was to have been expected, but even the middle classes represented in the Duma, failed to understand that without the voluntary coöperation of all classes of the population no country could carry on a war such as was being waged. For a whole year before the man in the street awoke to the situation, the economic, material and human resources of the nation were being ruthlessly, madly, criminally dissipated.

The Galician defeat, the millions of casualties and the loss of the frontier fortresses opened Russia's eyes. The country shuddered with horror and indignation, and the government, like an assassin caught in the act, was frightened into making certain concessions. It modified slightly its rule of terror and gave the middle classes some scope for independent activity, particularly in the domain of provisioning the army. The second phase of the War began. Independent bodies were permitted to organize the resources of the country. At last the Duma ventured to make itself heard. Various organizations began to function, through which the middle classes set about the task of improving the condition of the army, particularly the supply system, and reorganizing the production and distribution of food throughout the country. The success achieved

BEFORE THE CRASH

by the middle classes in this task was due in no small measure to the patriotic support of the working class. Peasants, workmen, coöperative societies and local officials were animated by the same patriotic anxiety and hastened to the support of the country. The population as a whole was at that time remarkably moderate and reasonable, conscious of its duty to the nation.

Had the Duma, in the autumn of 1915, evinced more self-reliance and courage, had it shown better understanding of the people and made common cause with all the responsible democratic and progressive forces, it could have easily driven from power the internal foe, as an essential prerequisite to the defeat of the external enemy.

In 1915 the country was not yet exhausted economically, the army was not yet bled to death and a radical and wholesome change in the government might have had very beneficial results. The nation's state of mind was essentially sound and by no means war-weary. But the impulse of self-sacrifice revealed by the people was permitted to go to waste.

Meanwhile the effects produced on the country by the debacle of 1915 had begun to lose their potency and to fade from the public mind. The government returned to its old ways and most of the population lost interest. Only the privileged class retained a slight measure of independence and relief. However, in the autumn of 1915, the various middle-class organizations, such as the Union of Municipalities and Zemstvos, managed to get into closer contact with the army, helping to reorganize and equip it, establishing friendly relations and gaining authority in all the ranks. An alliance between the army and the civilian population began to develop, and this alliance eighteen months later made the Revolution possible.

THE CATASTROPHE

The defeats and sufferings of the army in the retreat of 1915 had destroyed the last vestiges of its loyalty to the autocracy and the Romanoff dynasty. The nation's efforts in 1915 checked the military debacles by giving the army a measure of technical and moral support, but the principal source of Russia's peril, the Rasputin régime, still remained, for the entire system and administration of the government had been left untouched. As a crumbling edifice may be propped up for a while by buttressing it with iron girders and patching up the largest cracks, so did the popular movement hold together the disintegrating structure of Imperial Russia.

By the spring of 1916 the condition of the army had so much improved that Brusiloff was able to launch his Galician offensive—which saved Italy—striking against the advice of his superiors, who maintained that the army was too demoralized by the retreat of 1915 to undertake offensive operations. Brusiloff was unable, however, to follow up his initial brilliant successes because of lack of coöperation on the part of the high command and the anarchy and disorganization at General Headquarters. The subsequent development of Brusiloff's campaign wiped out the early victories and brought new trials and tremendous losses. Incidents such as the loss of tens of thousands of lives at Kovel may well account for the spirit of utter hopelessness which swept the army. The process of final disintegration set in in the autumn of 1916. By January of the next year the situation had become really critical.

Those reactionaries who hold that the Revolution undermined the Russian army, that the army, having fought heroically in 1914 and 1915, began in 1917 to flee in panic, distort the facts completely. The fight-

BEFORE THE CRASH

ing qualities of the army diminished inevitably. It became more and more an ill equipped and undisciplined rabble, commanded largely by men who had donned their uniforms after only six or seven weeks of training, and headed by staff officers who were shamefully negligent of their duty. Mutinous and corrupt garrisons in the rear formed a dark background to the tragic picture in the winter of 1916. It was not without cause that Brusiloff afterwards declared: "The experiences of 1916 prepared me for the Revolution." Nor was General Alexeyeff, in October, 1916 (at that time chief-of-staff to the commander-in-chief, Nicholas II), unjustified when, with the approval of Prince Lvoff, he planned to have the Czarina arrested and exiled to the Crimea and to compel the Czar to grant certain reforms.

The situation of the country as a whole was even more desperate than that of the army. Rasputin and his clique had thrown off all restraint. Their governing methods and their attitude and conduct towards the Russian people surpassed all the bounds of audacity and treachery. In the face of the growing food, financial, fuel and transport crisis they renewed, with fiendish ardor, the persecution of the coöperatives, the Union of Municipalities and Zemstvos, the municipal bodies and similar organizations. The censorship operated fast and furiously. Newspapers and organizations, however innocent, were suppressed. All freedom of assembly was forbidden. An endless stream of exiles flowed to Siberia from all parts of Russia. While the ruling clique, drunk with blood, was indulging in an orgy of oppression, Russia was perishing. Despair, terror and hatred permeated the soul of the people as never before. Defeatist and Bolshevik propaganda began to spread in labor circles. Strikes,

THE CATASTROPHE

deliberately fomented by the government, became frequent. A wave of riots swept the army and the hungry mobs. Desertions increased. Separatist movements sprang up in the border provinces. The country was advancing towards a precipice.

From Grand Dukes to peasants, indignation and wild apprehension seized the whole of Russia. Early in November, 1916, Grand Duke Nicholas Michaelovitch wrote to the Czar:

You have repeatedly affirmed your intention of carrying the War to a victorious conclusion. Do you think this is possible in the present condition of the country? Do you know the real state of affairs in the border provinces and in the interior? Believe me, when I urge you to shake yourself from the web in which you are entangled, I do so only because I hope and trust that by so doing you may save your throne and our beloved country from irretrievable disaster.

By "web" the Grand Duke meant Alexandra Feodorovna and the Rasputin clique.

Fearing that the folly of Alice, as Alexandra Feodorovna was called in the imperial family, would bring ruin upon the entire dynasty, the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovitch took part in the assassination of Rasputin. During the winter of 1916 the Duma, although by no means as yet revolutionary, began to talk in revolutionary language. In his famous speech Miliukoff openly attacked the Stuermer government and asked point blank: "Is this country actually in the hands of traitors?" Middle-class Russia raised the demand of a government responsible to the Duma. But in this demand, too, the Duma lagged behind. While the country as a whole joined in the demand for radical

BEFORE THE CRASH

constitutional reforms, the Progressive Bloc in the Duma (the majority), led by Miliukoff, Shidloffsky and Shulgin, was still clinging to the vague slogan: "A ministry with public confidence."

By December, 1916, a marked difference of opinion had arisen between the Duma and those organizations which most resembled it in political tone and social status, such as the All-Russian Union of Municipalities and Zemstvos.

"In proportion as the country has become aware of the general disintegration," said Efremoff, leader of the Progressive party, on February 27, 1917, "it has lost faith in the government and acquired faith in the Duma. There is now, however, an ever increasing tendency to set the Duma aside and solve the nation's difficulties in a more radical way. The country will shortly give proof of its discontent, and the obstinate shortsightedness of the authorities seems determined to drive it to the conclusion that it is impossible to obtain by parliamentary means a government responsible to the people."

The middle classes were losing faith in the Duma, but the more democratic and radical circles had never looked to it as an infallible guide, though they had tried for months to induce it to join in the struggle for the salvation of the country. In November, 1916, the country's peril had become so evident that all those who had any spark of patriotism had already become revolutionists. In December the whole of Russia was unconsciously adopting revolutionary methods against the government. As I said to the Duma majority: "Like Molière, who did not know when he was talking prose, you reject revolution while you talk and behave like revolutionists." When Stuermer tried to pour oil on the troubled waters by announcing the news to

THE CATASTROPHE

the Duma that the Allies had agreed to give Constantinople to Russia at the conclusion of the War, even the most imperialistically inclined felt uncomfortable at the pompous ministerial declaration which had so little relation to the actual state of the country.

Altogether, the obvious incongruity between Russia's actual situation and the interminable repetition by boasting officials of their tactless phrasemongery about complete victory over Germany and Russia's hereditary mission with regard to Turkey infuriated the exhausted masses.

The New Year of 1917 found Russia in this state of increasing anarchy. A few still cherished gleams of hope that the old government would, at the eleventh hour, bethink itself or, at least, perceive its own deadly peril and make concessions to the demands of the nation. The Crown, or rather the influences behind Alexandra Feodorovna, who had meanwhile openly taken up the reins of government, met this hope with a series of new reactionary measures. Scheglovitoff, hated by the whole of Russia, was named president of the Imperial Council, to which were added also a number of other notorious reactionaries. A new ministry was formed, with Protopopoff as its central figure and Golitzin, who was himself much surprised at the appointment, as premier. Protopopoff was at that time the most hated man in Russia, so that it is not difficult to imagine the effect created by his appointment.

In September, 1916, Protopopoff, a former member and ex-vice-president of the Duma, had availed himself of Rasputin's help to work his way into the Ministry of the Interior. His appointment, many were convinced, was backed by certain financial interests in Rasputin's *entourage*, with a view to ending the War as quickly as possible, even at the price of a separate

BEFORE THE CRASH

peace. It was upon him that Rasputin's mantle descended after the latter's assassination.

So the authorities answered the country's demand for a popular ministry by resorting anew to the instrumentality of the Rasputin clique. Taking the bit between its teeth the government rushed, at full speed, towards a collision with the people. There was no longer any doubt of its preparing for the collision. Strikes were fomented by government agents, and often the strikers came to battle with the police. Secret plans were worked out by Protopopoff, in coöperation with General Kourloff, one of the most detested officials in the police organization, for the "pacification" of Petrograd, plans involving wholesale bloodshed.

The police department was zealously provoking riots among the population. Incredible as it may sound, the military censorship, on orders from the Ministry of the Interior, prohibited the publication in the Petrograd press of the following appeal by the labor section of the War Industrial Committee:

Comrades! Workers of Petrograd! We think it our duty to beg you to resume your work immediately. Labor, conscious of its responsibilities at this moment, must not weaken its forces by such strikes. In the interests of the working class you must return to your factories.

In spite of the fact that there was a great strike in progress in the munition factories, the publication of this appeal was forbidden.

With diabolical persistency the police department, led by Kourloff, set itself to destroying all democratic organizations that stood for national defense and to push the masses into the arms of defeatist-Bolshevist agitators, who were assiduously spreading their propa-

THE CATASTROPHE

ganda among the aroused workers and soldiers. In January, almost the entire labor group of the Central War Industrial Committee was arrested. This group was the stronghold of national defense in the world of labor and was bitterly assailed by the Bolsheviks and defeatists. At the same time the government began the demobilization of the labor sections of the provincial War Industrial Committees. A conference in Moscow of various independent organizations called to consider the food problem was forbidden, although many cities and towns were on the verge of starvation. Even a commercial and financial conference summoned in Moscow was suppressed. The central body of the coöperative societies, which were supplying the army and the cities with food, was dissolved and its members prosecuted.

In a word, the government set itself to demolishing everything that was likely to avert an uprising, meanwhile laying plans for the suppression of rioting in Petrograd with machine guns. The motto attributed to the Ministry of the Interior—"through anarchy to a separate peace"—was being successfully put into effect.

I must say, however, that Nicholas II had nothing to do with all this. The government was simply preparing to confront him at a given moment with a *fait accompli* which would oblige him to sign a separate peace. I cannot say whether Alexandra Feodorovna had anything to do with it. Her immediate circle was not above suspicion and German agents were hovering around her and Madame Vyroubova. But whether the Czarina and her lady-in-waiting took part in preparing the country for a separate peace I cannot say, although I did my best to find out when I first took office.

BEFORE THE CRASH

Meanwhile the condition of the army was becoming desperate. By January, 1917, there had been 1,200,000 desertions and the number was still increasing. The army was demobilizing itself. The high command was helpless to stem this tide for home. Special military police detachments were formed to round up the deserters and rewards of from seven to twenty-five copecks a head (according to the rank of the deserter) were offered as encouragement in the man hunt.

The Naval and Military Committee of the Duma was at its wit's end to find a means of preventing the army from melting away. Military discipline began to vanish. Whole units refused to fight or to relieve their comrades in the trenches. Here and there the men in the trenches engaged in and encouraged fraternization with the Germans. The lack of military discipline in the rear was even worse. A memorandum dealing with the tragic condition in the army and the urgent need for certain measures to cope with it, drawn up by a special conference on defense consisting of representatives of the Duma, the Imperial Council and independent organizations, was laid before the Czar at the end of January. Shingarioff, Chairman of the Military and Naval Affairs Committee of the Duma, obtained an audience with the Czar in a naïve effort to prevail upon him to take measures to save the country.

The condition of the country as a whole continued to be worse than that of the army. Owing to the coal shortage, the blast furnaces in the south came to a standstill in December and the munition factories in Petrograd began closing down. In February came an acute crisis in the textile industries of Moscow, which used a very large proportion of the coal required by

THE CATASTROPHE

the country. The transportation system was becoming more and more disorganized. Passenger traffic had to be stopped for weeks at a time to enable the most essential military and supply trains to go through to the front. In Vladivostok alone there were 40,000,000 pouds of military supplies and agricultural material which it was quite impossible to transport into Russia. The last war loan had brought almost nothing. In January and February, 1917, 995,000,000 paper rubles were issued as against 662,800,000 for the first half of 1916. The cost of the War exceeded 50,000,000 rubles a day.

At the end of January the Central Committee of the All-Russian Union of Municipalities and Zemstvos presented a memorandum to the Government Food Commission which contained the following observation:

"The towns received only one-fiftieth and one-eighteenth of the supplies allotted to them, respectively, for November and December, 1916. All stores in the towns are exhausted. By February there will be no bread."

And, indeed, there was no more bread in the towns by February. There were hunger riots in all the provinces. On February tenth, what the authorities called a "misunderstanding" due to "food shortage" occurred in Petrograd. The working classes had been provoked by hunger into the riots which were to justify the government in concluding a separate peace.

From this time on it became impossible to stem the inevitable development of events into revolution. The time for a coup d'état, for a quiet revolution from above, had passed. Not without reason did Basil Maklakoff declare on May 17, 1917, before a conference of Duma deputies:

BEFORE THE CRASH

"At a certain moment it became clear to us that it would be impossible to carry the War to a successful conclusion while the old régime was in power, and it became the duty for those who feared the consequences of an upheaval to save the country from revolution from below by revolution from above. That was the duty we failed to fulfill. If our children should come to curse this Revolution they will also curse those who did not know in time how to prevent it."

There had been but one means of saving the country from revolution and consequent anarchy, and that was by liberating it by a swift and energetic stroke from the government which was destroying it, as a center of infection is cut out of a healthy body.

Those who were in closest touch with the masses realized most clearly the danger of an anarchic revolution. That was why the interparty group, to which I belonged, so persistently demanded radical reconstruction of the government and did its best to speed it. Beginning with the autumn of 1916 preparations for a coup d'état were launched in various circles. A number of organizations and even members of the Progressive Bloc in the Duma took part in the conspiracies. The conspirators were in touch with army circles, and some generals, not to mention junior officers, were drawn into the plans. There were a number of plots under way and the plans were discussed by the respective conspiratory groups at secret meetings in Moscow and Petrograd. One plan provided for the arrest of the Empress and her entire circle, followed by a demand for the Czar's abdication in favor of his young son, under the regency of Michael Alexandrovitch.

Some of these plans were ready for execution in the

THE CATASTROPHE

winter of 1916, and those initiated into the conspiracies were looking forward with impatience to their realization. Our interparty group, consisting of representatives of all Left elements in the Duma, was in touch with all active radical forces in the country and through our agents we sought to develop a common program and prevent disagreements which might interfere with the proposed coup d'état. This was made necessary because many revolutionary centers were not familiar with the ends for which other groups were working. Besides helping to facilitate a coup d'état we had to prepare all democratic and socialist parties for the event and to create a center around which to rally the revolutionary democracy as a controlling force against popular excesses. The secret information bureau of the democratic parties provided such a center.

As far as I knew of and participated in the plans for a coup d'état, that was how the situation stood in Petrograd and Moscow. There were, however, additional projects of the same kind at the front and elsewhere. For instance, one group of army officers planned to bomb the Czar's automobile from an aeroplane at a certain spot along the front.

Unfortunately none of the plans for a coup d'état was carried out. The men upon whom the realization of these plans depended were held back by their old traditions of loyalty to the throne and the imperial family. They kept on vacillating and tinkering with the plans, trying to define the powers of the regent, etc., and putting off the decisive moment. But every day's delay endangered the whole enterprise by exposing it more and more to discovery by the police. Several opportune moments had already been permitted to pass.

BEFORE THE CRASH

Finally, the coup d'état was fixed by one group for the beginning of March. But it was too late.

On February twenty-seventh the Duma began what was to be its last session. A great popular demonstration was expected on that day. Police and troops lined the streets leading to the Tauride Palace. There was a strong movement among the workers for marching to the support of the Duma, but the Duma majority, through Miliukoff's open letter to the workers, firmly and even rudely declined this help, asking the workers to take no action. (The government censorship, by the way, tried to stop publication of this letter.) The session began in an atmosphere of great tension. The majority, although realizing that critical events were impending, refused to admit that the time for conciliation with the government had passed, and that the people were about to take matters into their own hands. It still obstinately refused, in its all too moderate declaration of policy, to join in the demand of the whole middle class for a ministry responsible to the Duma.

This declaration was altogether in dissonance with the actual situation and with the opinion of the whole country. Yet the leaders of the majority regarded the original draft of this declaration, as drawn by Shulgin, too radical. Even those progressives who bolted the Progressive Bloc to join the Left believed that a solution consistent with loyalty to the Czar was still possible, although they declared in their pronouncement that the country was "on the eve of demonstrating its discontent." On the same day (February twenty-seventh) Miliukoff declared in the Duma: "Only heroic measures can cure the helplessness that has descended upon the country as the result of the wall which the government has built around itself and

THE CATASTROPHE

which during the last three months has become even more impenetrable." He added: "We have reached a decisive point. On all sides we see patriotic anxiety. Only timely conciliation can bring salvation. The Duma alone cannot remove this anxiety, but we believe that the patriotism of the people will not allow our powers of defense to be weakened at this critical moment."

On the following day I addressed the Duma and for the first time the Duma heard the unvarnished truth. I declared openly that the ruin of the country was due not to ministers who come and go but to the power which appoints them, *i.e.*, the monarch and the dynasty. I called upon the Duma to begin at once, by every available means, a fight to the bitter end against these enemies of the people. I implored the Duma, in the name of the highest duty of citizenship, to take action immediately and to risk everything for the salvation of the country. I concluded by saying:

"If you refuse to listen to my warnings, you will meet facts instead of warnings. Look at the strokes of lightning already flashing across the sky" I declared that I for one would not shrink from violence.

A few days later I said: "In my opinion an open collision with the authorities is bound to come soon."

But very few realized the catastrophe was approaching and most people listened to my warnings with incredulity. I remember that after my first address many people condoled with me, fearing the consequences that would befall me as a result of my attack on the dynasty. Most people thought we were on the verge not of a revolution but of a bitter and hopeless reaction. The police department was still very effective in its operations and every day the papers carried statements "forbidden by the censorship" in the

BEFORE THE CRASH

columns allotted to the publication of speeches in the Duma. Even Pourischkevitch, the reactionary deputy, protested against the mutilation and falsification of his speeches by the military censorship. The number of arrests and house searches increased. The police and troops were successfully putting down the growing riots in the capital. On March fifth there was serious rioting in the largest factories in Petrograd, including the Putiloff works. The troops obeyed orders to resist the workers.

On the same day the Czar left for General Headquarters, leaving behind with Prince Golitzin a decree for dissolution of the Duma, signed but undated, "ready for possible contingencies." The fate of the Duma was thus left entirely in the hands of Protopopoff and his clique. On February sixth the rioting assumed new intensity and the attitude of the government was such as to provoke Shingarioff, speaking in the Duma, to denounce the existing régime as "a dictatorship of madness."

The moment of collision approached more quickly than I thought. On March ninth all the newspapers of Petrograd ceased publication simultaneously with a general strike in almost all the factories. Here and there were battles between the throngs and the armed forces of the government. The acute food shortage in the capital finally compelled Prince Golitzin to make concessions. A special conference composed of members of the government (Protopopoff was not permitted to participate) and of representatives of the Duma and Imperial Council resolved to pass a law transferring the control of the food supply to the town councils within twenty-four hours. The Duma passed this law at its morning session, March tenth, which was its last.

THE CATASTROPHE

There was firing that day all over the capital. A crowd was shot down on the Nevsky Prospekt, quite near the Duma. The troops were still obeying orders. There was also fighting on the Znamensky Square and in other parts of the city. In the evening the Pavlovsk Regiment mutinied, but was immediately suppressed, the ringleaders being taken to the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul.

During these days conferences were going on in the Duma continuously from morning till night. The majority was still hopelessly trying to find a "loyal" way out of the situation.

On March ninth the whole city was transformed into a military camp. At midday all bridges were barricaded and it became difficult to get into the center of the city from the suburbs. The Constitutional Democrats (Cadets) and the Laborites insisted that the session of the Duma, fixed for March twelfth, be held on the eleventh. We felt that it was essential to have an All-Russian political center in these days. But most parties disagreed with us and we compromised by calling a meeting of the leaders for midday and the Duma session for 2 P.M. on March twelfth. At midnight, on March eleventh, Rodzianko received the Czar's decree of dissolution, which set no date for the reconvoation of the Duma. This last act of the "dictatorship of madness" turned the hunger riots into the Revolution.

"It takes a thunderbolt to make a muzhik cross himself," says an old Russian proverb. The action of the government in dissolving the Duma when confronted by the hungry, maddened throng struck Russia like a thunderbolt and opened her eyes to the abyss towards which the madmen and traitors of Czarism were pushing her. But for the Duma there could have been no

BEFORE THE CRASH

revolution. Neither could it have come about without the revolt of the workers and soldiers. At the first meeting of the Cadet party after the Revolution, Miliukoff said: "We must bow to those bodies we have seen lying in red coffins on the Field of Mars."

When we left the Tauride Palace on the evening of March eleventh we did not yet know that the Duma was to be dissolved. The mutiny of the Pavlovsk Regiment on March tenth was not supported by the rest of the garrison. The crowds in the streets seemed to be dispersing and calming down that evening. It looked as if the disturbances were drawing to an end. That is why the crash on March twelfth came as a surprise.

I have given a brief summary of the events which led up to the Revolution. The Revolution did not create the anarchy in Russia, but was in fact the healthy effort of the country to save itself from the approaching disintegration. The criminal folly of the government and the war exhaustion brought Russia to the Revolution.

The Revolution succeeded in abolishing the autocracy, but it could not remove the exhaustion of the country, for one of its main duties was to carry on the War. It had decided to put the utmost strain upon the country's resources. Herein lay the tragedy of the Revolution and of the Russian people. Some day the world will learn to understand in its proper light the *via crucis* Russia walked in 1916-17 and is, indeed, still walking. I am quite convinced that the Revolution alone kept the Russian army at the front until the autumn of 1917, that it alone made it possible for the United States to come into the War, that the Revolution alone made the defeat of Hohenzollern Germany possible.

THE CATASTROPHE

The years 1917-27 have shown that centuries of autocracy cannot fail to leave their marks on a country. The body politic was corrupt long before the Revolution. The state, built on the sweat and blood and tears of the people, had long been disintegrated and the soul of the people poisoned by the old régime. Russia ground down by the autocracy was like a slave rotting in a foul dungeon without light or air. By straining every nerve she found strength to break her fetters and prison bars, and to escape from her suffocating captivity to freedom.

But I hear sad and angry voices objecting:

"What was the use of breaking out of prison only to collapse upon the threshold?"

To these I would reply:

"Wait! Russia has not fallen dead. The fight has only just begun."

CHAPTER III

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

I HOPE the reader has by this time sufficiently grasped the political and social environment in which the Provisional Government was obliged to begin its work.

Upon its formation, March sixteenth, and its departure from the superheated atmosphere of the Tauride Palace, the government held its sessions temporarily in the main meeting room of the Ministry of the Interior. In the silence of the spacious, quiet, ministerial chamber, hung with portraits of former rulers, imperial ministers and representatives of Russian reaction, every one of us understood, perhaps for the first time, the change that had come upon Russia. There were eleven of us. Every one of us had been regarded by the Czarist Ministry of the Interior with hostility and suspicion. And now we had in our hands the supreme power of the great empire, power that came to us at the most difficult period of the War, after an explosion which swept away the entire old machinery of administration.*

* The Provisional Government was composed as follows: Premier and Minister of the Interior, Prince G. E. Lvoff, a veteran leader of zemstvos; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paul N. Miliukoff, leader of the Constitutional-Democratic (Liberal) party, Minister of War and Marine, A. I. Gutchkoff, member of the Duma, leader of the Octobrist (Conservative) party and representative of the Moscow merchant class; Minister of Finance, M. B. Terestchenko, non-partisan, one of the wealthiest men of Russia, a noted philanthropist

THE CATASTROPHE

I remember with what emotion Prince Lvoff read to us at our first meeting a report on the situation in the provinces. From all towns and cities, provincial and county seats came telegrams which seemed as if they had been written by one and the same hand. They all told the same story: the old administration, from the governor to the last town policeman and village bailiff had disappeared without trace, and everywhere were being formed, instead, all sorts of self-appointed organizations—Soviets, committees of public safety, conferences of public leaders, etc., etc

"I have telegraphed," the prince told us, "to all the chairmen of zemstvo administrations the suggestion that they assume temporarily the duties of governors, in the capacity of commissars of the Provisional Government." But in the majority of cases the chairmen of the zemstvo administrations in the provinces were conservatives and, frequently, quite outspoken reactionaries. They enjoyed no wide influence and could not maintain themselves in authority for a week. Very much the same was true everywhere in the provinces with regard to the military authorities. Somewhat more favorable was the situation with respect to the

and vice-chairman of All-Russian War Industrial Committee, Minister of Agriculture, A I Shingarioff, Constitutional-Democrat, zemstvo worker, prominent member of the fourth Duma and close coworker of Paul N Milukoff; Minister of Education, Professor A I Manuiloff, Constitutional-Democrat, noted Moscow reformer and university leader; Minister of Commerce and Industry, A. I. Konovaloff, Progressive, noted public leader, member of the fourth Duma, vice-chairman of the All-Russian War Industrial Committee and one of the foremost industrialist and commercial leaders of Moscow, Minister of Railways, N Nekrassoff, member of the fourth Duma, leader of the Left Wing of the Constitutional-Democratic party; Procurator of the Holy Synod, V Lvoff, moderate conservative, big landed proprietor and member of the fourth Duma; State Controller, Godneff, Octobrist, veteran public leader from the Volga region; Vice-Premier and Minister of Justice, A. F. Kerensky.

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

judicial machinery. But here, too, even in Petrograd, where the institution of the election of magistrates had remained intact, there was a difficult situation. The villages, liberated from all administrative vigilance, had begun to "govern themselves." There was an immediate mad rush by the peasantry for the land.

In the cities, various self-appointed organizations, whipped up by the raging revolutionary tempest, were devoting themselves to such creative revolutionary activities as raids, searches, confiscations and the liberation not only of political prisoners but also of criminals of the most desperate hue.

One need only visualize for a moment this raging human ocean, freed from all bonds, this molten, as yet formless revolutionary mass, to realize the tremendous historic and positive rôle played by the Soviets, which everywhere, as in Petrograd, contributed greatly to the establishment of revolutionary discipline. Despite all their great errors and frequent stupidities, the Soviets represented the first primitive social and political molds into which the molten revolutionary lava began gradually to flow and to cool off.

Sometimes it seems to me that the word "revolution" is quite inapplicable to what happened in Russia between March twelfth and sixteenth. A whole world of national and political relationships simply sank to the bottom, and at once all existing political and tactical programs and plans, however bold and well conceived, appeared hanging aimlessly and uselessly in space. The political parties that survived the March earthquake (the Social-Revolutionaries; the Social-Democrats and the Constitutional-Democrats—all other more moderate and conservative parties being reduced at once to zero or almost to zero) sought to act in accordance with all the rules of Western Euro-

THE CATASTROPHE

pean political art. Their leaders tried to classify the character of the Revolution by calling it "bourgeois" or "socialist." They put forward political proposals, which in their opinion demanded immediate realization, and disputed about compromise formulæ. But no one wanted to perceive the most important thing of all: the disappearance of the machinery of state, the need of restoring the apparatus of administration itself, without which all programs, platforms, formulæ, resolutions, etc. assume the value of so much useless paper.

According to opinions in Russia and abroad, based on the classic models of the French Revolution of 1789, the epoch of the Provisional Government can be divided into two periods: first, the bourgeois period, under the premiership of Prince Lvoff, and, second, the socialist period, under the premiership of Kerensky. Correspondingly, it is customary to say that in the second period the government was more radical in its legislative work, less constructive in its methods of administration and weaker in the application of administrative compulsion.

The terms bourgeois and socialist would probably be applicable to the Russian Revolution if after the March upheaval all power in Russia had actually been in the hands of the bourgeoisie itself, organized as in the West in compact class formation, able to fight for power and knowing how to keep it.

This interpretation would probably be correct if such a bourgeoisie had been superseded in the natural course of the struggle for power by the fourth estate—the city, village and intellectual proletariat, and which would have occupied in the first, the bourgeois period of the Revolution, the position of an oppressed social class.

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

But such was not the situation. On the contrary, exactly the opposite occurred.

The very formation of the Provisional Government took place under circumstances of tragic misunderstanding.

Given to thinking along the line of historical precedents and knowing the art of handling theoretical propositions rather than that of orienting themselves in the confusion of real life, the ideologists of the "bourgeois democracy" believed sincerely that the downfall of absolutism would be marked by the transfer of all power into the hands of the liberal-conservative bourgeoisie represented by the Progressive Bloc in the fourth Duma. On the other hand, the socialist leaders and the ideologists of the "revolutionary proletariat" fully accepted this phantastic idea, for it coincided with their own theoretical conceptions, based on the very best European models of the development of a "real" revolution. Viewed from the point of view of the precedent of the French Revolution, the period of the Russian Revolution, beginning with March twelfth, constituted the epoch of the National Assembly and the Girondins.

Subsequently, within a few years, it was to give way to the Jacobin Terror, etc. The absence of life instinct and of political intuition in the minds of political dogmatists assumed at times most curious propensities. Thus, during their joint consideration of the program of the Provisional Government, the representatives of the Soviet (or of the so-called revolutionary democracy) forced on the Temporary Committee of the Duma the obligation not to determine beforehand the future form of government in Russia, pending convocation of the Constituent Assembly, while P. N. Miliukoff, the ideologist of the Progressive Bloc, fought

THE CATASTROPHE

long and stubbornly against this limitation. What was all this about? It was very simple: P. N. Miliukoff was convinced of the inevitability of a constitutional monarchy in Russia after the Revolution (and on the night of March sixteenth), while the leaders of the revolutionary proletariat did not venture to demand openly the establishment of a republic, at a time when the republic had already become an historic fact.

The Soviet leaders, guided by Western European political formulæ, believed sincerely that after March twelfth the political power had to be in the hands of the bourgeoisie, this power to be controlled by the labor democracy, headed by the "class conscious proletariat," which would support the government only to the extent to which it did not misuse its dominant position in the country to the disadvantage of the basic interests of the masses.

Both sides—P. N. Miliukoff and the accidental leaders of the Soviet, drawn from the ranks of the revolutionists of 1905—were quite sincerely convinced of the wisdom of their opinions; they failed to notice what was actually taking place about them and to sense the profundity of the popular upheaval.

I write this not with intent of sitting in judgment upon the leaders of that period. On the contrary, I wish only to show right at the beginning that neither ill will nor mischief played any conspicuous rôle, nor had any appreciable part in the development of those future acute disagreements around the issue of the Provisional Government, which contributed to the weakening of the government's barely established authority. The entire depth of the tragic catastrophe experienced by Russia is measured precisely by the fact that despite all their good will and their urge to help the country, people frequently injured it because

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

they failed to realize the substance and meaning of what was taking place.

Ignoring all historical comparisons and European precedents, the problem before the Provisional Government and the political organizations and parties supporting it, however conditionally, was not a complex but a simple one, yet extremely difficult in its simplicity.

It was necessary to restore the country and the state.

This task of reconstruction did not consist in restoring territorial boundaries embracing a definite population. In this material sense of the word, Russia did not as yet require restoration, for Russia was still intact. The task of the moment was the restoration of the national governmental fabric as a creative, administrative and protective political organism. This meant, first of all, restoration of the administrative apparatus, of the machinery of government. It meant teaching some to govern and others to yield obedience. This problem was rendered all the more difficult by the necessity of continuing the War and by the need of what was in reality tantamount to reconstruction of all juridical, economic and social foundations of the country.

One of the strongest and brightest impressions of my life is the recollection of the work of the first cabinet of the Provisional Government, composed, as Lenin described it, of ten capitalist ministers, among whom I occupied the position of "hostage of the democracy."

Had Lenin and his lieutenants possessed one-hundredth part of the ability to renounce all personal considerations of power and vanity, of the capacity for unselfish service to the country and the people dis-

THE CATASTROPHE

played by the millionaires Terestchenko and Konovaloff; by such typical representatives of the landed nobility as V. Lvoff, or by that characteristic liberal intellectual A. I. Shingarioff, Russia would have in all probability escaped the Golgotha to which she was brought by the blind, senseless, utterly unnecessary fomenting of class hatred by the irresponsible demagogues of Bolshevism.

PRINCE GEORGE LVOFF

Above all did Prince G. E. Lvoff represent the make-up and spirit of the Provisional Government. This true aristocrat, whose family had its roots in centuries of Russian history, was undoubtedly the most democratic among us, closer than any of us to the real soul of the Russian muzhik.

Modest, almost unnaturally retiring, absent-minded in all matters concerning himself, the prince outwardly possessed not a single earmark of the head of a government. Revolting against the whole past of his power-loving ancestors, baronial rulers of medieval Russia, he seemed to have subdued in himself the family instinct for power. He felt a revulsion against all the exterior attributes of authority and of the state. During the sessions of the Provisional Government he kept deliberately in the background and saw to it that every one had an opportunity to speak his mind to the end, to say everything he wished to say. Rarely, almost never, did he interject a word of command or criticism into the stormy debates of the cabinet, seeking always to bring about agreement by a kind word of wisdom, forgetting frequently the necessity for hurry to keep the government from lagging behind the elemental sweep of events.

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

All his life the prince had struggled stubbornly, unceasingly, with tremendous energy, against the stupid, ferocious, bureaucratic machine of the old absolutism. But he always approached the painful questions of Russian life not like a politician but in a peculiarly original manner. He moved not from ideas to man but from man to ideas.

Although detesting the old régime, the prince had always succeeded in striking some human chords in the men who served it. He would gather about him leading men and women devoted to the people's interests, and draw up, with their coopération, plans and programs of social welfare. Then, unostentatiously, he would depart for some ministry or some gubernatorial center, where single-handed, by means he alone seemed to possess, he would accomplish what innumerable political resolutions and demands of the Duma or zemstvo organs failed to achieve.

In his work the prince covered the length and breadth of Russia. In most difficult periods of agricultural crises, he promoted successfully the work of moving masses of peasants to settlements in the Far East. During the Russo-Japanese War, as head of the zemstvo organizations, he did much for the wounded and accomplished what was far beyond his official duties and limitations. He was a member of the first Duma. But this page of his career, in the opinion of some the most striking of his life, he regarded as the most uninteresting and unnecessary. After the dissolution of the first Duma, he left the Constitutional-Democratic party and went out to seek again, in his own way, new roads to the happiness and welfare of the people.

Long before the European War, in the period of the cruel Stolypin reaction (1907-11) he began to de-

THE CATASTROPHE

vote himself to the organization of the independent forces of the zemstvos. Slowly and surely the prince assembled around him elements which could, in the moment of the death of the old régime, take over, if necessary, the machinery of government.

It is remarkable how the roads of the two most typical representatives of aristocratic and bourgeois Russia, of Prince Lvoff and Gutchkoff, met during the War in this work of the building up of independent political and social organizations and of the selection of men of administrative ability, for during the period after the Russo-Japanese War and of the first Duma the two men had been politically widely divergent.

During the European War the name of Prince Lvoff became the symbol of the social and cultural forces of Russia. At the front he gained great popularity in the commanding corps because of the tremendous work for the army performed under his leadership by the Union of Zemstvos.

I met the prince for the first time shortly before the Revolution—I think it was in December, 1916. I had already made the acquaintance of his close associates and knew not only of the general humanitarian and social work but also of the contrabandist political activity of Lvoff's circle. Sensing the hurricane advancing upon Russia, I felt finally that I could no longer postpone making the personal acquaintance of one who was obviously destined to be one of the future political leaders of emancipated Russia. I met the prince in Moscow, at the headquarters of the Governing Committee of the Union of Zemstvos, following his adjournment of some business meeting. After exchanging salutations he led me to his study. There after a brief conversation we came to understand one another, both

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

of us realizing the tribulations awaiting the country in the very near future.

There was a peculiar simplicity, bordering at times on what seemed to be *naïveté*, in the political conversation of the prince. But behind this *naïveté* lay concealed a deep knowledge of the people and one sensed that he had not only felt the problems of Russia through his heart but had thought them out carefully through his mind. Soon after the beginning of the Revolution many of the admirers and associates of the prince began to hate or to detest him for his "lack of will-power," for his "Tolstoyan non-resistance to evil." However, let those who consider the prince's policy in the first weeks of the Revolution, both as premier and minister of the interior, as "non-resistance to evil," let them undertake to build a house of cards in a tempest, under the open sky, to the accompaniment of an all-devouring hurricane! The prince perceived honestly the full depth and measure of the decay and dissolution of old Russia. He, therefore, looked upon the elemental explosion of the people's fury without astonishment. He understood, suffered and forgave. There are moments in the history of all nations when the highest wisdom of a ruler expresses itself in being able to wait, in the ability to grasp instinctively and not by reason the outwardly invisible spiritual pangs and experiences of the nation.

"Let not your hearts be cast down by Russia's freedom," said the prince in the beginning of May at a meeting of the Duma, in a speech remarkable for its thought and faith. To the prince the heritage of Russia's struggle for emancipation lay not in a collection of dead formulæ, fit only for the archives, but in the life and substance of the course of events.

THE CATASTROPHE

The prince did not reveal "strong will-power" either as premier or as minister of the interior. But how could he have revealed it had he desired to do so? Police officials had just begun to reappear in city streets—they were termed militia men, in order not to revive recollections of the old régime—and they were men, assembled hurriedly and casually, who had but little conception of the technical features of their work.

When newspapermen sought to learn from the prince, following his initial sad experience in trying to find substitutes for the provincial governors, what he intended to do and whom he intended to appoint, he replied: "We will not appoint any one. The local populations themselves will elect and inform us accordingly, and we will approve." Most astonishing "non-resistance"? Not at all. It was simply a demonstration of the prince's profound knowledge of the situation and of his realization that the moment had not yet come for the central authorities to exercise the power of appointment and to issue orders. As soon as the situation in the various towns and provinces permitted it, with the natural simmering down of the boiling cauldron, the central authorities began to act.

"We will build the new life of the people not by ourselves but together with the people." These words of Prince Lvoff, expressed in another way by Abraham Lincoln, should enable my readers to understand the remarkable personality of the first freely chosen spokesman of the government of Free Russia.

We may, therefore, ask, could such a man be the representative of the class interests of the bourgeoisie? Could he express the will of the propertied classes when his entire soul was bound much more intimately, tenderly and deeply than that of men like Lenin with the

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

aspirations, the actual interests, the whole future of the Russian peasantry? This future lay in the land.

BASIC REFORMS

The land! No mention of it is to be found in the declaration of the Provisional Government made public on the day of its assumption of office! Nevertheless, at its very first meeting, A. I. Shingarioff—afterwards killed by the Bolsheviki, on the eve of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly of which he had been elected a member—was instructed by unanimous decision of the cabinet, and without any discussion, to work out a basic plan for the complete readjustment of land distribution and to prepare measures for the execution of this social reform, unprecedented in the history of Europe. Perhaps somewhere in the subconsciousness of one or another member of the Provisional Government there was a trace of doubt against this bold way of putting the question of the abolition of the entire old system of land ownership, but this egoistic feeling, so entirely natural to any man, was immediately suppressed by the imperative need of surrendering and sacrificing all for the sake of the country.

On April second, the Provisional Government promulgated its agrarian reform, which was to give all the land into the hands of those who worked it, and on the same day the government created a Central Land Committee, which, in cooperation with similar provincial and county land committees and elected representatives of the population, was to draft a basic land law for presentation to the Constituent Assembly.

Quite simply, without any struggle, without any of the classic revolutionary scenes on the order of the

THE CATASTROPHE

celebrated oath of the French nobility at the beginning of the Revolution of 1789, occurred this fundamental social change. A great, real and unprecedented social revolution was brought about through the signatures of the representatives of that propertied Russia which, according to all party formulæ, should have defended the "propertied privileges of the bourgeoisie."

Likewise, the first declaration of the Provisional Government, drafted jointly by the representatives of the revolutionary proletariat from the Soviet and of the Temporary Committee of the Duma, contained not a word about the labor question. On this question the "bourgeois" government had the complete freedom of action it enjoyed in the land problem. Nevertheless, on March twentieth, Konovaloff, the new minister of commerce and industry, Moscow millionaire and proprietor of a large manufacturing establishment, placed at the head of his program the creation, in connection with the Ministry of the Interior, of a special labor division, incorporating representatives of labor organizations in the machinery of the department, which began functioning on May twentieth. On March twenty-fourth, Konovaloff introduced the eight-hour day in the shops and factories of Petrograd, by agreement with the manufacturers. Soon after he recognized the workers' shop committees and began the establishment, by agreement with the representatives of employers and employees, of special boards of arbitration for the settlement of industrial disputes. The Provisional Government's measure determining the function of trade unions in the state remains a model to this day. What the Provisional Government failed to include in its work was only the demagoguery of Lenin, so destructive and so costly to the workers themselves.

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

In comparison with the scope of its constructive social reforms, the purely political program of the "bourgeois" Provisional Government, representing the only measures to which it pledged itself, appears as a mere trifle. After long casuistical disputes, of interest only to themselves, the socialist intellectuals representing the Soviet and the liberal professors representing the Duma had drafted the following measures which the Provisional Government was to put into effect:

1. Complete and immediate amnesty for all acts of political and religious nature, including acts of political assassination, military uprisings and agrarian disturbances. (This was put into effect March nineteenth, followed by abolition of capital punishment on March twenty-fifth.)

2. Freedom of speech, press, assembly, trade union organization and strikes, and application of political liberties to men in the military service in so far as these were practicable under the technical limitations of the service. (Put into effect immediately.)

3. Abolition of all juridical discriminations based on distinctions of class, creed and nationality. (Put into effect April twenty-sixth.)

4. Immediate preparations for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly (on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage), whose function it would be to determine the form of government and the constitution. (Preparations begun at once.)

On May eighth a special commission, with the participation of representatives of all parties and social organizations, assembled for the drafting of an electoral law to govern the elections to the Constituent Assembly, and of technical measures for the election.

THE CATASTROPHE

5. The substitution for the old police of a people's militia, its chieftains to be chosen by popular election and to be subordinate to the local government authorities. (Organization of such a militia was begun at once.)

6. Election of all organs of local self-government on the basis of universal, direct, equal and secret suffrage.

On May second the government made public its measure for the election of city councils and on May twenty-eighth was promulgated the basic reform of local zemstvo self-government.

The official program of the Provisional Government was thus put into realization within a few weeks.

In addition, during the two months of its existence, the first cabinet of the Provisional Government accomplished the following:

It proclaimed the independence of Poland.

It restored the autonomy of Finland.

It created committees for the working out of local autonomy in the Ukraine and Latvia.

It reorganized the administration of government in Turkestan and in the Caucasus and in Turkish Armenia and Galicia which were occupied by Russian troops.

It abolished all special courts, introducing the general system of trial by jury.

It reorganized the food distribution system, strengthening the grain monopoly and introducing fixed prices on all articles of necessity.

It established county zemstvos and reformed the system of peasant administrative machinery.

It promulgated a law for the improvement and development of cooperatives which is regarded as exemplary to this day.

WITHIN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

It abolished the exile system and reformed the prison system.

It restored the institution of the election of magistrates.

Finally, the Provisional Government changed radically the administration of the Church, restoring the complete independence of the Orthodox Church, and prepared also the convocation of a sobor, which had not been convened for two hundred years, and which in the autumn of 1917 restored the patriarchate.

The measures enumerated above were sufficient to occupy generations of normal political effort. The Provisional Government carried out these measures quickly and easily, despite the fact that it was burdened by the War, with all the involved problems of communications, the food supply and acute financial difficulties.

I assert confidently that as soon as Russia emerges from the present period of Bolshevist reaction, she will inevitably resume the work of national reconstruction on the basis of the political, juridical and social principles laid down in the first two months of the Provisional Government.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

AND so the Provisional Government, by means of legislative initiative, began to lay the foundations of the new democratic state. The work proceeded swiftly. Towards the end of the summer the new organic laws began to make themselves felt in the increasing systematization of the nation's political life and the strengthening of the administrative apparatus. But while this work was in progress it was necessary to live, *i e.*, to command at the front, to restore order in the rear, to circumscribe and bring within the limits of the possible the flaming appetites of individual groups and classes. All these wanted all they could get—all liberty, all rights but no obligations.

This extremism, this lack of moderation in the demands made upon the government was to be explained by the fact that the population, never having participated in the government of the country and only now, for the first time, realizing its boundless power, believed that the government was omnipotent and that its resources were unlimited—now, as before, after three years of the wear and tear of war and of economic exhaustion. To stop the destructive sweep of the elemental revolutionary tempest it was necessary to reveal to the people all the wounds and ulcers of emaciated Russia, to rouse in the heart of every soldier, workman and peasant concern for Russia.

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

Not the egoistic instincts of capitalist Russia but the real interests of Russian democracy itself, just come into power, required the protection of industry from destructive experiments by the workers, the restoration of authority at the front and a struggle against anarchic sentiments in the village. The basic interests of Russia demanded from all citizens the greatest possible self-control and the subordination of all one's personal, class and caste interests to the fundamental problem of the moment—the salvation of the country and of the state.

Russia could escape from her insurmountable difficulties only in the measure in which the people developed the feeling of political discipline and political responsibility. In the development of this feeling in the masses, the government could play a great part, but only on the condition of growth and strengthening of confidence in the government. While an old, traditional organ of authority, supporting itself upon a strong administrative apparatus, can continue to exist for a long time, even after having lost the confidence of the country, no new government can possibly afford such a luxury, in the absence of even the simplest and most primitive instruments of compulsion. In this case, obedience to the demands of the new government depends entirely upon the good will of the people, who follow the instructions of the government only to the extent to which it has their confidence. The development of authority constituted the cardinal condition for Russia's safe emergence from the crisis of war and revolution.

However, the more intensively the organization and solidification of democratic organizations around the Soviets proceeded, the wider grew the psychological

THE CATASTROPHE

gulf between the revolutionary government and the revolutionary democracy in the Soviets. Every action of the government was regarded with suspicion by the leading circles of the Soviet and subjected to close examination from the point of view of the interests of the proletariat and of the "revolutionary people." The speeches and articles of the Soviet leaders, playing the rôle of a "benevolent" parliamentary opposition, in themselves contained nothing evil or criminal. Under normal conditions, with a parliament and a parliamentary majority to fall back upon, all this would have been even useful to the government. But the leaders who essayed the rôle of the opposition were in reality bound not to a minority but to a majority in the country. And this majority, untried and inexperienced in any parliamentary theories and party doctrines and having no conception of parliamentary practice, interpreted literally all the sharp criticisms directed against the government by the self-appointed opponents. The Soviet press sowed the wind of opposition and the government reaped the revolutionary storm.

This situation finally became impossible and intolerable. All the leading members of the Provisional Government understood well the source of the political tension and of the brewing crisis. They all understood that it was necessary to change the composition of the Provisional Government in a manner corresponding to the real disposition of forces in the country. Foreign Minister Miliukoff alone stuck to his own theory that all the power after the Revolution must belong to the representatives of those elements of Russian society which are termed, according to the nomenclature of socialist ideologists, the bourgeoisie.

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

PAUL N. MILIUKOFF

Miliukoff is one of the most striking and most brilliant figures of intellectual Russia. His name is inextricably bound with the last decades of the struggle against Czarism, to the history of which he added many brilliant pages.

An historian by nature, Paul N. Miliukoff is by temperament a statesman of great ability. In his youth he followed the call of science, but his fighting instinct, rather than police persecution, prompted him to alter his career. In the end, instead of a venerable scientist, Russia received in him one of her greatest political leaders. But the very historical attributes of his mind taught Miliukoff to understand political events *post factum*, to look at them more or less from the perspective of distance. Miliukoff sees life more clearly through a book or an historical document. Having analyzed the past, he proceeds to draw corresponding conclusions, in accordance with all the rules of political logic. Thus, having worked out his program, his strategic and tactical plan, Miliukoff proceeds to carry it out with all the fervor of a political leader who is thoroughly convinced of the wisdom of his judgment, failing to take into consideration, however, the circumstances of to-day and, what is frequently more important, of to-morrow.

This lack of political intuition is not an irreparable fault under normal conditions in one's political activity, but in periods when minutes mean years and months become equal to decades, when the link between to-day and to-morrow is broken, the clash between precise and well-ordered schemes of political activity and life rushing on at blinding speed becomes catastrophic.

P. N. Miliukoff came to the foreign office with a

THE CATASTROPHE

well conceived plan of foreign policy. In the autumn of 1916 this plan was still quite in place. But in March, 1917, it was of no more use or, rather, it became an historical document fit only for the archives.

To put it more concretely: the trouble was not in the aims set by the first minister of foreign affairs of the Provisional Government but in the methods chosen by him in his struggle for their realization. The Russia that had to declaim daily about the Dardanelles, the cross on St. Sofia, and to whom it was necessary to speak constantly of war to a victorious conclusion—that Russia ceased to exist on March 12, 1917. The New Russia which had come to take her place, lived under a new war psychology and wanted to hear new war slogans and to set new war aims.

The fundamental change in the language of her diplomacy and her diplomatic methods, incumbent at that time upon the Provisional Government, did not, of course, in any way prejudice Russia's actions after victory. Victory has its own logic and creates in the victor its own psychology. In war, diplomacy is only one of the means of struggle, of war propaganda. It must speak in a language corresponding to the attitude and sentiments of the country at war.

"You may speak as you like and what you like," said Gutchkoff to Miliukoff at a meeting of the Provisional Government, "but say only that which bolsters up the fighting capacity of the front."

Even before that, early in April, on my way with Miliukoff to General Headquarters at Mohileff, I told him the same thing but in another way:

"It is necessary now to change entirely the language of all our diplomatic notes and declarations."

This opinion of an "inexperienced diplomat" provoked the horror of the new minister and of his

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

associate, Prince G. Trubetzky, a professional diplomat.

My words and the "opportunist diplomacy" of Gutchkoff were not a misfortune for Russia. Its misfortune was Miliukoff's refusal to yield in form to the new national psychology in all his declarations.

THE DISPUTE OVER WAR AIMS

It would be of no interest to describe here in detail the casuistical dispute which continued for two months between Miliukoff and the Soviet, between the *Rietch*, organ of the Constitutional-Democratic party and the *Izvestia*, organ of the Soviet. The only interest this dispute has for us now lies not in its substance but in the consequences. At that time all those endless discussions—whether or not Russia's war aims had changed after the Revolution, whether or not Russia had in reality abandoned her claims to the Dardanelles, whether or not the Allies should be officially informed of the new war formula proclaimed solemnly to the Russian people by the Provisional Government on April ninth—reacted painfully on the nerves of the people, exhausted by the War, and provoked the greatest irritation. The Provisional Government itself had found the proper way of presenting Russia's war aims to the people in the following declaration:

Leaving it entirely to the people, in close unity with the Allies, to decide all questions in connection with the World War and its solution, the Provisional Government believes it to be its right and duty to declare immediately that the aim of Free Russia is not domination over other peoples, not to deprive them of their national patrimony, not the forcible seizure of foreign territories, but

THE CATASTROPHE

the establishment of a stable peace on the basis of the self-determination of peoples. The Russian people do not seek the extension of their external power at the expense of other peoples, nor do they include in their aim the enslavement and humiliation of any other peoples.

This formula, which served as the basis of President Wilson's famous fourteen points, did, at any rate, reflect closely the idealistic aspirations of the Russian people as a whole for an early, just, democratic peace. At any rate, the Provisional Government's war aims manifesto had nothing in common with the former declarations on this question, which Russia had been accustomed to hear from the lips of the Czar's foreign minister, S. D. Sazonoff, and his successors during the War.

Nevertheless, the unanimous desire of the Provisional Government not to aggravate the differences about Russia's war aims, and to follow closely its solemn declaration, was not in any way reflected in Miliukoff's personal conduct and particularly in his policy as editor of his official party organ. Immediately upon the government's declaration of its war aims, the Minister of Foreign Affairs let it be known that this declaration, addressed to the Russian people, did not in any way bind him as minister of foreign affairs, in his policy. Miliukoff's declaration, coming upon that of the government, which had succeeded in satisfying and placating the Soviet leaders, produced the impression of a bomb explosion. A veritable verbal war ensued. And not Miliukoff alone but the authority of the government itself, which had barely begun to consolidate itself, was the sufferer.

The outburst of hatred against Miliukoff in the Soviet revealed the entire deep psychological crisis of

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

the government, the crisis of lack of confidence, which began brewing on the very first day of the Revolution, due to the contradiction between the composition of the government and the disposition of forces in the country, and which had to be eliminated if the country was to escape new and extremely dangerous perturbations.

MY INTERVENTION

Miliukoff's personal declarations were already being accepted in all revolutionary, democratic and socialist circles as evidence of the Provisional Government's duplicity.

Because of my position in the Revolution and in the Provisional Government I happened to be in closer touch with the people and felt more keenly the beating of the nation's pulse than the other members of the government.

I saw the helplessness of Gutchkoff, as minister of war and marine, in his efforts to stem the tide of anarchy and dissolution in the army and navy. I saw the complete helplessness of the Minister of the Interior, in his struggle to overcome the anarchy in the cities and villages without the support of the revolutionary social forces. I felt the decline of my own influence in the struggle against the Bolshevik demagogues because of the slippery, dualistic policy of the Soviet in making its confidence in the government conditional on this or that point of theoretical casuistry.

However valuable the principle of unity of the Provisional Government was, the government that was born in the first minutes of the Revolution, and much as it was important to keep all the original members of the cabinet in the government, because of their solemn oath to lead the country to the Constituent Assembly,

THE CATASTROPHE

and however desirable Miliukoff's presence in the Provisional Government was, his continuance as minister of foreign affairs was becoming a real national danger. On the other hand, it was no longer possible to tolerate a situation in which the leaders of the revolutionary democracy in the Soviet, who had the advantage of tremendous moral authority, did not share direct responsibility for the fate of the country.

It became necessary to force developments. On April twenty-fifth, late in the evening, I informed the press that the Provisional Government was preparing to consider the question of dispatching a note to the Allies, informing them of Russia's new war aims, as proclaimed by the Provisional Government on April ninth.

In some way my statement appeared in the press the next day in garbled form. Anticipating developments, the newspapers announced that the government was already discussing the note to the Allies.

Some of the members of the government had already decided to bring this question before the entire cabinet.* However, no such discussion by the cabinet as a whole had yet taken place.

For this reason the Minister of Foreign Affairs was quite justified in demanding from the Provisional Government an official denial. On April twenty-seventh the newspapers reported: "The government has not discussed and is not preparing any note on the question of war aims."

This denial provoked a veritable storm. As was

* It was precisely in these difficult April days that the beginning was laid of that compact group within the Provisional Government which continued to exist up to the days of the Korniloff rebellion (in September) and which was termed the "Triumvirate" (Terestchenko-Nekrassoff-Kerensky). In April there were five of us, the others being Prince Lvoff and Konovaloff—A. K.

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

foreseen, Miliukoff was compelled to agree immediately to the dispatch of a note to the Allies on the question of war aims. But now this act assumed an exaggerated importance in the eyes of public opinion, being regarded as having been forced by the Soviet and, what was worse, by the Petrograd garrison.

THE FIRST MOVE OF THE BOLSHEVIKI

Because of the acute situation, the war aims note to the Allies was edited by the entire cabinet.* We spent the whole night doing this in the office of Minister of War Gutchkoff, who was quite ill. The contents of the note should have satisfied the most violent critics of Miliukoff's "imperialism." However, what developed was a psychological break which cost us very dearly. The lack of confidence in and the hostility to Miliukoff in the Soviet and in the Democratic-Revolutionary circles in general was so great that these elements were no longer able to consider and to grasp the contents of the note. Revolutionary hysteria began.

At a special meeting the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet adopted a resolution of sharp protest against the new "imperialist" declaration of the Provisional Government, and Lenin, who had just arrived from Switzerland, via Germany, hastened to dispatch his lieutenants to the barracks.

On May third the Finnish Guards Regiment appeared in the streets of Petrograd. Fully armed, with

* In these days was formed within the cabinet a special committee for preliminary consideration of all domestic and foreign questions relating to the conduct of the War. Those named on the committee were Prince Lvoff, Miliukoff, Terestchenko, Nekrassoff and myself.—A. K.

THE CATASTROPHE

red banners and placards denouncing the Provisional Government, particularly Miliukoff and Gutchkoff, the troops marched to the Maryinsky Palace. All over the city appeared armed detachments of workmen and soldiers. The government was at that moment not in the Maryinsky Palace, which was surrounded by the armed mob, but on the Moika, at the office of Gutchkoff. Here appeared General Korniloff, commander of the Petrograd military district, with the request for the government's permission to call out troops for its protection.

Unanimously the government declined any such protection. We were all confident of the wisdom of our course and felt certain that the population would not permit any acts of violence against the government.

And, in truth, on the same day appeared an explanation by the Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies declaring that it had not summoned the troops to demonstrate against the government. Previous to this, immense throngs had appeared in the streets in a great demonstration in honor of the Provisional Government and, particularly, of Miliukoff.

This first mobilization of Bolshevist forces ended rather ludicrously for Lenin, but not without the sacrifice of a number of lives as a result of the shooting in the streets.* The spilling of innocent blood had also a sobering effect on the leaders of the revolutionary democracy. The Soviet chieftains hastened to repu-

*In the evening there was shooting beneath the windows of the Ministry of Justice, where I had as guests several members of the French socialist delegation, who had come to Russia to urge the Russian workers to continue the War to a victorious end. Particularly patriotic, frequently with tears in his eyes, was Marcel Cachin, who subsequently became leader of the French Communist party. While in my office he did not seem to relish the too close shots of the revolutionary proletariat.—A. K

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

diate the Bolshevik adventure. On agreement between those leaders of the Soviet who were loyal to the government and the latter, the government made public, on May fourth, an explanation of the Foreign Minister's note of May first.

THE SOVIET LEADERS ENTER THE GOVERNMENT

As a matter of fact this explanation explained nothing, for there was nothing to explain. What it did was to emphasize points of importance from the point of view of popular psychology. The government pointed out that its note was sent by unanimous agreement of all the members of the government. In other words, the Soviets and army committees were informed that in this Miliukoff and Kerensky were in complete agreement. None of the ministers wished to repudiate solidarity with Miliukoff as a member of the Provisional Government, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to be transferred, none the less, to some one else who would be able to conduct the nation's foreign policy by methods more elastic. Such was the opinion of the entire Provisional Government, with one or two exceptions. The question of readjustment of portfolios within the government was formally presented by me.

On April fourth I demanded from the government, on threat of leaving the cabinet, the transfer of Miliukoff to the Ministry of Education. At the same time the question was boldly raised of obtaining the immediate entrance into the government of Soviet leaders and leaders of the socialist parties. On May eighth the cabinet crisis became a fact. Rejecting the advice of the most prominent leaders of his own party (V. Nabokoff and M. Vinaver), P. N. Miliukoff refused to

THE CATASTROPHE

accept the portfolio of education and left the government. Simultaneously I sent a communication to the Temporary Committee of the Duma, the Soviet and the Central Committee of the Party of Social-Revolutionaries. In this communication I declared that henceforth the Provisional Government had to include not merely individual and casual representatives of the democracy, but men "chosen formally and directly by the organizations they represent." I also made my continued participation in the government contingent upon the agreement of all Left parties following the inclusion of their representatives in the ministry.

My communication was only the final, formal step in the development of the struggle for a coalition government. From the very beginning of April the government had unanimously decided to obtain, at all costs, the inclusion in the cabinet of representatives of the Soviet and of the socialist democracy. Prince Lvoff announced this categorically at his conference with the executive committee of the Soviet on May fourth.

It was not so easy, however, to bring this to realization. For not only were some of the liberals decidedly opposed to the participation in the "bourgeois" government of representatives of the so-called labor democracy, but this opposition was equally strong on the part of the orthodox Marxists in the Soviet. Shortly before the acute cabinet crisis, F. Dan, one of the most prominent leaders of the Mensheviks, had branded as "calumny" the very suggestion of the Soviet's agreement to participate in the reconstruction of the government.

"The supreme power is the Provisional Government," he had declared, "while the revolutionary democracy, represented by the Soviet, makes its influence on the progress of political life felt by means

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

of uninterrupted organized pressure upon the government, and by control over it."

In fighting for a government coalition, so obviously essential to the interests of the country, those of us who never followed rigid party lines were thus compelled to break through the blockade of theoretical formulæ and dead political blue prints piled up against us by the orthodox custodians of party doctrine, both in the socialist as well as in the bourgeois camp. Very soon the crisis grew more acute because of the departure from the government of War Minister Gutchkoff. I will speak of him and of the causes of his resignation later. At this point I will only say that with his departure the first cabinet of the Provisional Government concluded its existence. The romantic period of the Provisional Government came to an end.

On its departure, the first cabinet of the Provisional Government left behind for the nation a political testament which still continues to stir one's mind and heart. In drawing up the balance sheet of its short but extremely difficult and intensive work, the government addressed to the nation the following words of warning which were destined to become a terrible prophecy:

The Provisional Government cannot conceal from the population the difficulties and obstacles it has found in its work. It cannot, also, refrain from mentioning the fact that these difficulties are increasing and are provoking serious alarm for the future.

Called into life by a great popular movement, the Provisional Government regards itself as the agent and custodian of the people's will. As the basis of political administration it has chosen not violence or compulsion but the voluntary subordination of free citizens to the government they

THE CATASTROPHE

have themselves created. It seeks support not in physical but in moral forces.

From the very beginning of its existence the Provisional Government has never violated these principles. It has not been responsible for the shedding of a single drop of the people's blood nor has it sought to erect barriers of force against any current of social thought.

Unfortunately and to the great peril of liberty, the building of new social buttresses for strengthening the country is lagging far behind the process of dissolution called forth by the collapse of the old political order. Under these circumstances, with the refusal of the government to resort to the old, compulsory methods of administration and other artificial means of raising the prestige of authority, the difficulty of the task confronting the Provisional Government becomes insurmountable.

The elemental urge of individual groups and elements of the population, as represented by the politically least intelligent and least organized of these elements, to achieve their desires and obtain satisfaction of their demands by methods of direct action and seizure, threatens to destroy internal unity and discipline, and to create fertile ground for acts of violence stimulating hostility to the new order, and for the cultivation of private interests and ambitions to the detriment of the general interest and of the fulfillment of civic duty.

The Provisional Government considers it its duty to declare frankly and definitely that such a state of affairs makes administration of the country extremely difficult and threatens, in its consequence, to bring the country to internal dissolution and defeat at the front.

There rises before Russia the terrible vision of

THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS

civil war and anarchy which will destroy liberty. The dark and tragic road so well known to history, the one leading from liberty through civil conflict and anarchy to reaction and restoration of despotism, must not be that of the Russian people.

But Russia did not escape this Road of Crucifixion, for, amidst the horrors of war and the outbursts of civil conflict, the people did not have enough will-power, patience and discipline to stand fast on the brink of the precipice.

There was only one way of salvation—the union and coöperation of all the living, creative forces of the country, regardless of their political and social aspirations!

In May, 1917, we of the Provisional Government succeeded in laying the foundations of such union. After some resistance the Soviet, by a considerable majority (forty-one to nineteen), decided to accept the proposal of the Provisional Government for the participation of the Soviet in the government of the country. The old Soviet formula of conditional confidence, so destructive to the Provisional Government seeking to stand above party, was definitely abandoned.

Very soon the Soviet leaders and the leaders of the Left parties themselves, as members of the government, came under the blows of demagogic Bolshevik propaganda and of the impossible demands of the mobs run amuck. They then realized the entire scope of their responsibility towards the future of Russia. Only on the morning of May eighteenth, with the formation of the new coalition Provisional Government, did it become possible for the government, for the first time since the Revolution, to govern, to demand and to command.

CHAPTER V

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

THE OLD ARMY

THE entire nation was developing a new state and political consciousness. This was, above all, true of the army and navy. The first cabinet crisis of the Provisional Government, which resulted in the inclusion in the ministry of the new forces of the labor democracy, born of the Revolution, produced simultaneously a fundamental change in the administration of the army. Instead of Alexander Gutchkoff, leader of the conservative bourgeoisie, I was obliged to become minister of war and marine.

But, in order to understand the events in the Russian army in the summer and autumn of 1917, it is necessary to have at least some conception of the psychology, the mental and spiritual attitude characterizing the Russian army before the outbreak of the Revolution.

I have spoken already of the conditions in the Russian army before the crash. All those who at that time had any opportunity to look behind the curtain of military secrecy, behind the screen of official reports and official optimism, to see the Russian army in its daily surroundings, were driven to despair by the disorder and disorganization confronting their eyes. A few, like Gutchkoff, foresaw already at the beginning of the War the tragedy which would befall Russia. How could it be otherwise? Criminals and traitors like Sukhomlinoff, Minister of War, were in charge

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

of supplying the army. The Grand Duke Nicholas, cruel and incompetent, was commander-in-chief, while General Yanushkevitch, vengeful, intriguing and meddling in politics, was his chief-of-staff. Following the Grand Duke, this evil genius of the first half of the War, came a whole string of incompetent commanders-in-chief, promoted to their positions because of the services they had rendered to the reaction, men who, having been absorbed by civil and administrative activities, had had no time or inclination to occupy themselves with army problems and were but dimly acquainted with the developments of twentieth-century military science.

This high military oligarchy, surrounded by a crowd of careerists and adventurers, had in its hands the fate of the army and, consequently, of the country. These oligarchs and their satellites looked with contempt upon the millions of human beings whom they commanded, regarding them as just so many "cattle in gray," as just so much cannon fodder. They sneered at those honest officers who suffered painfully but protested in vain against the tragic situation. Then came the debacle of the spring of 1915. It descended upon the army like a mighty thunderbolt, producing some cleansing effects.

The Russian people paid for the crimes of the ruling oligarchy with millions in killed and wounded, with the loss of all frontier fortresses, of the whole of Poland, and of untold quantities of guns, rifles, munitions and supplies. People who curse the Revolution have forgotten all this. They have forgotten the disintegration and despair brought upon the army by Sukhomlinoff, filling the hearts of the troops with poison and hatred against the régime dominated by Rasputin.

THE CATASTROPHE

A vast network of political espionage was part of the army organization under the rule of Sukhomlinoff. The entire officer corps was utilized for the purposes of special political departments devoted to spying upon the rank and file and the people as a whole. Police agents and *agents-provocateur* filled the ranks of the soldiers and sailors. Regimental commanders had to spy upon and denounce their subordinates. One hears a great deal about how the Revolution destroyed the authority of the officers and sowed discord in the army. This is downright falsehood.

The authority of the commanding body was killed long before the Revolution, even before the War, by the whole system of army administration. Not the Revolution but the autocracy, in deadly fear of losing its sole support, the army, transformed it into a police organization, making it impossible to develop relationships of friendship, respect and mutual confidence between officers and soldiers.

One must be courageous enough not to close one's eyes to the truth. Remember how the army and navy lived during those sinister years after the collapse of the revolutionary movement of 1905-6 and up until the crash of 1917. How could the nightmare of political espionage in the barracks develop a feeling of loyalty and confidence on the part of subordinates towards their superiors? Did not the honest and conscientious officers suffer and curse the rôle of police agents imposed upon them against their will? I know thoroughly from my own observation the inner life of the army during the ten years of the Stolypin-Rasputin reaction.

During that decade I was called upon constantly to defend, as counsel, soldiers and sailors prosecuted for political offenses. As a member of the Duma I had to

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

read and listen to hundreds of tales of woe and complaints about the administration of the army and navy. These complaints came to me surreptitiously from all ranks and quarters of the military establishment.

Under the exterior mask of consideration for the welfare of the troops, behind the screen of a patriarchal, feudal system there was being waged a silent struggle between the rank and file and their commanders. Increasingly bitter grew the hatred of the plain soldiers until the last vestiges of authority were wiped out.

The best men, who, according to the frequent testimony of their commanders, were most conscientious, most capable and most desirable for the military service, came inevitably under the influence of political propaganda and were quickly transformed into "untrustworthy" political "criminals." I remember one case before the Petrograd Military District Court in 1908-9. The case involved a revolutionary organization in the First Artillery Brigade of the Guards. Some fifteen soldiers stood before the court, accused of reading forbidden literature, of political propaganda and of organizing a social-revolutionary circle in the brigade. The witnesses against the men were their own commanders, the best officers in the brigade, the most educated and the most conscientious. One of them, the commanding officer of the battery, said with bitter emphasis: "But they are our best soldiers!" Yet, it had been his duty to spy upon them, to tolerate patiently the intrusion of police agents in the life of the battery, to follow the development of political propaganda in order to obtain evidence against his best men. The soldiers regarded their officers as agents of the police department, failing to realize that very frequently the officers resented and despised the es-

THE CATASTROPHE

pionage duties forced upon them by army regulations. When the verdict against the accused soldiers was pronounced, they tore off their shoulder straps and threw them into the faces of the judges.

And what was the situation in the fleet, particularly in the Baltic Fleet, where the level of culture was higher than in the army? The officers' quarters and the sailors' holds were two enemy camps, always at war with each other, always suspicious of one another. Scarcely a year went by without some disturbances on one vessel or another, or without discovery of some political propaganda. Prosecutions inevitably followed, in the course of which the officers were always witnesses against the men. With savage joy and satisfaction did the sailors after the Revolution go through the archives of the fleet, extracting the records of all past sins of their officers, revealing their espionage upon the crews and the secret service rôles of the respective officers and commanders of the fleet. "How could we tolerate that officer!" was the repeated statement made to me by men in the fleet after the Revolution. "It was due to him that so many of our people went into penal servitude!"

In justice, however, it must be said that few of the officers took up the work of spies voluntarily. The great majority did not go beyond the minimum duty required of them by the authorities with regard to spying on their subordinates, and that with great aversion. They could not refuse or did not have the courage not to fulfill the least measure of what was required of them in this connection, because they themselves were surrounded on all sides by espionage and supervision.

The high command in the army and navy was quite ready to pardon almost any offense on the part of officers, except the one deadly sin of political "untrust-

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

worthiness." In many cases this meant expulsion from the army and navy. To incur the suspicion of untrustworthiness one had only to show sympathy with such moderate political parties as the Constitutional-Democrats. Suspicion of sympathy with parties like the Social-Revolutionaries or Social-Democrats was, of course, downright high treason. To show the slightest liberal inclination meant falling into the category of a dangerous suspect. Even to a civilian it was aggravating to see how the police department made itself at home in the army and navy, assuming the rôle of supervisor and giving orders.

Many communications from the police department and the local *gendarmerie* fell into my hands, informing commanders in the army and fleet that such and such a soldier was in the employ of the political secret service. The commander in question was instructed not to interfere with the work of such "collaborators" among his subordinates and men. Just before the Revolution, in the winter of 1916, there was a trial before the Petrograd Admiralty Court, involving a Social-Democratic organization in the Baltic Fleet.

The political police interfered brazenly in the inner life of the army and navy, undermining mercilessly all normal relations between officers and men and destroying authority and discipline.

The officer was quite helpless in the matter. He had no ideas wherewith to oppose extreme political propaganda, because he had been taught to defend only official policy, hateful to the rank and file and frequently to the officer himself. He could not combat the nefarious activity of the political police because he himself was in its tentacles and often an unwilling and unconscious tool in its hands. The heartless initiation into the service; the breaking-in, as Gutchkoff characterized

THE CATASTROPHE

it; the cold, lifeless official patriotism demanded by the government in its insistence on obedience to the Czarist trinity of "absolutism, orthodoxy, nationality"; the utter defenselessness of the weak before the strong—such was the system governing the life of the army and navy in 1914. Nowhere in Russia were the remains of serfdom more conspicuous than in the daily life in the army barracks. This serfdom persisted not only in the attitude and contact of the aristocratic officer class towards the good and simple peasant soldier, not only in the lack of responsibility on the part of the officers with regard to the plain human dignity and self-respect of the men, who were compelled to tolerate physical punishment without protest, but in the entire blind code of brutal discipline and obedience, in the absence of any invigorating idea of national service. This idea was replaced by the detested empty formula, "for the Czar, the Faith and the Fatherland." The general conception of the service prevalent everywhere was one of a difficult, uninteresting and detestable task. The commanding bodies were marked by an astonishing absence of any feeling of personal responsibility. The result was an icy officialdom and soulless bureaucracy.

In many respects the army organization was an actual fragment of the Russia of serfdom. Its duty throughout the century-old fight between the people and Czarism had been, first and foremost, to defend the existing régime, without reasoning or consideration. Nowhere were men of independent thought and action feared more than in the army, especially in the commanding body.

"This man is guilty—he has tried to think," Nicholas I is said to have remarked about one of the Decembrists. This aphorism epitomizes the attitude of the autocracy towards the army officer. Only his

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

body was wanted, not his brain. General Vannovsky, favorite war minister of Alexander III, was thoroughly convinced that education was bad for the army. Himself a man of no education, it was his deliberate policy to give no promotions to officers of academic training.

Ignorance and blind devotion at the top; ignorance and automatic obedience at the bottom—that was the autocracy's conception of an ideal army.

Of course, such an ideal was even more utopian and unattainable than any ill considered socialist schemes. It was good to dream about, to strive for, but the more one strove for it, the more energetically one sought to realize it, the more unattainable it became. The more severe and the more merciless the autocracy was in its efforts to exterminate all the vital, living elements in the army, the greater grew the discontent and "disloyalty" in army circles. Military objectives were relegated more and more to the background with each year. More and more the army was carried away in its life and activity by the inner political struggle. "The army must be kept outside of politics," was the repeated assertion of the Czarist war ministers, but in reality the army was not kept outside of politics any more than was the school system, which was surrendered to the mercies of reactionary political wire-pulling and intrigue. It is not very far from the truth to say that there was nothing but politics in the army. The army was intended to be the chief rampart of the autocracy. Was this not politics? Was not every officer duty bound to inspire the rank and file with a definite political creed? Was he not himself inspired from earliest childhood, from the elementary classes of the military school to his exit from the military academy with a definite, primitive political creed?

THE CATASTROPHE

We schoolboys in the gymnasiums and other "civilian" schools also had to swallow large doses of politics, the prescribed quantity of official patriotism. Our teachers and mentors dealt it out to us in a rather perfunctory, desultory manner, for the sake of going through the motions to please the authorities. There was not time enough to steep our minds and souls in government politics, for we spent the greater part of the day outside the school walls, under more salutary influences. It was otherwise, however, with our brothers and chums who entered the Cadet Corps.

For a period of from seven to ten years they fell into an atmosphere of darkness, where they were transformed into a special species of man. My childhood and youth were spent in close contact with the officer milieu. My closest chum entered the Cadet Corps when very young. We met every year on our vacations. He had been an able, well informed, independent young man. Yet we, his comrades who remained free, observed from year to year the effects of military education upon his soul. Mutual misunderstanding and estrangement developed between us. The cause was not that he had different manuals and books, but in the inevitable estrangement of every cadet from the life that pulsated outside the walls of his military school, in the artificial surroundings in which he lived ten months out of the year, in the slow, systematic process of inoculating him with a distinct set of ideas and conceptions intended to become imperceptibly part of the future officer's nature and to insure him forever against undesirable political influences. In the military hothouses, where a special species of man was cultivated to meet the special needs of the autocracy, the official gardeners had to produce an ideal compound of a military specialist, honest and faithful to his duty,

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

devoted to the Czar, but hostile to the political dreams, hopes and aspirations of civilian Russia.

The conceptions of civic duty, honor, fatherland, state, service, demanded from the future officer were quite different from those of the rest of Russia. After some ten years of such hothouse training and education the officer was "ready." He went into some army unit, quite ignorant of the rest of Russia, quite incapable of adapting himself outside the military surroundings in which he had been brought up. In this way was part of Russia's youth torn away from its comrades to become the defense of the autocracy against "the enemy within."

Such an enemy was particularly the Russian intelligentsia, whose ranks were filled with the brothers and chums of the very same young men who became the buttresses of the Czar and the fatherland. In time, a deep gulf developed between members of the same class or circle, only because some went in for a military career while others chose civilian occupations, because some became officers and others students.

I remember the frequent disputes our company of military young men and students fell into the moment we began to speak of matters political. Immediately we began to speak different tongues. We ceased to understand each other, we grew irritated, we offended each other, because the things sacred to some were the incarnation of evil to others. I am convinced that all of us loved Russia equally well and wished her nothing but good. But our interpretations of Russia were as different as were our conceptions of Russia's welfare and Russia's good, so that involuntarily we saw in each other Russia's enemies, the enemies of the Russian people.

Yes, it was a terrible, fratricidal enmity and hatred!

THE CATASTROPHE

Particularly deep, nay, bottomless grew the gulf between military and civil Russia, between the military and civil intelligentsia, during the period of the Russo-Japanese War and the revolutionary movement that followed upon it.

We appeared then on opposite sides of the barricade. The vast majority of the officers were still with the autocracy or remained quite neutral in the political struggle, performing mechanically their duty of defending the throne against the inner foe.

The rest of Russia, civil, cultured Russia, the entire intelligentsia plunged into the struggle of liberation. In the army, or rather in the officers, who then saved the autocracy, thus delaying the death agony of the old régime for another twelve years, we saw the worst enemies of the people, of the greatness, welfare and future of the country. There were many, too many, officers at that time who believed candidly that the students, the intelligentsia in general, the rebellious workers, and the peasants who were destroying and burning the landed estates, were the cause of all of Russia's misfortunes. Yes, a great deal of water had gone over the dam since December 17, 1825, when a group of brave Guard officers, the "Decembrists," standing quite alone in the feudal Russia of that epoch, appeared on the Senate Square in Petrograd and raised the banner of revolt against the autocracy, in the name of liberty and constitutional government. At that time the soldier masses looked on indifferently upon the tragic fate that befell those great sons of the nobility, those early forerunners of the liberation movement, who perished so gladly and so willingly for the cause of freedom. Eighty years later, in 1905, the army officers alone, and particularly the Guard officers, remained faithful to the autocracy to the end. They

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

failed to recognize in the masses of the students and workers they shot down the direct heirs and descendants of the Decembrists.

But the year 1905 was a turning point in the life of the army, and particularly in the life of the army officers. For the first time military and civil Russia met face to face and tried to speak with each other. At first the *pourparlers* served only to accentuate the mutual enmity, but both sides were deeply shaken by the events. The Revolution, although drowned in blood, compelled people to think and to look deeper into the ills and sufferings of Russia. The officers who survived the Russo-Japanese War began to ponder upon what had happened. They began to think and to understand. Here and there officers participated and even played a leading part in the military mutinies of 1905-6.

Time passed. Russia began to change.

The ideas of liberty and emancipation sown in the years 1905-6 among the masses began to show results. The new conscripts drawn into the army were quite different from those who preceded them. The inner foe penetrated deeper and deeper into the army ranks. The ancient patriarchal order in the army gave way more and more to one of frank police surveillance. The forces of life beating upon the army from all sides cracked the traditional creed followed by the officer class, based upon the three pillars of "Absolutism, Orthodoxy, Nationality."

Parallel with the political fermentation and tempests of the last decade of the autocracy (1906-16) there was in progress within the ranks of the officers a concealed but stubborn process of political thought. A new consciousness developed. The feeling of discontent gained momentum with the reëstimation of many

THE CATASTROPHE

values. Many began to burn what but yesterday they had worshiped, and were ready to worship that which but yesterday they had burned. The blind began to see and the deaf to hear. Rasputin and his clique did more to destroy the old psychology of loyalty of the officers than did thousands of revolutionary proclamations and leaflets.

On the other hand, the lesson of the Russo-Japanese War was not without effect. A whole school of non-conformists arose, who gave battle to the old military hierarchy, striving to do away with the musty traditions and obsolete methods of army organization which had been in vogue since the conquest of the Crimea. But here, too, in the domain of pure military technique, the young reformers met with obstacles which compelled them to think not of military problems alone but also of politics. In such manner did the process of awakening in the army proceed until the honest, conscientious elements of the officer class were confronted clearly by the alternative: the autocracy or Russia.

Finally, came the War of 1914. The weakness and inadequacy of the entire military establishment manifested itself without delay. The terrible reality of the situation became immediately apparent. The relation between the corrupt and inefficient army system and the autocracy was revealed with tragic clarity to every one.

On the battlefields of Galicia, under the walls of Warsaw, Brest, Kovno, in the Mazurian Lakes in East Prussia, the Romanoff dynasty perished, killed by the bullets of German machine guns striking the hearts of Russian officers and troops.

Gutchkoff was not alone when in 1915 he definitely turned revolutionist. The majority of Russia's officers shared his sentiments or were ready for revolution by

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

that time. The dream of generations of the Russian intelligentsia found realization—in the army. The whole army united with the people in a common love and a common hatred.

Alas, it was too late! In the army itself there had accumulated too many painful emotions of wrath and hatred on the part of the lower against the upper ranks and, as usual, the crimes of the system had to be expiated by those who were least guilty.

The soldier in the trenches, who only the day before had been flogged, beaten and humiliated, could not understand the real causes of his suffering. He could not look beyond his immediate superiors, and sought to find the culprits close at hand. The more politically conscious soldier could not forget the recent devotion of his chiefs to the autocracy, for which his comrades suspected or accused of “disloyalty” had paid so dearly. And all these individual sensations were overshadowed by a common distrust of the “master,” which seized the masses the day after the Revolution. To the mind of the average soldier the “master” was, of course, the officer.

I have tried purposely to restore in some detail the psychology of officers and soldiers under the old régime and upon the outbreak of the Revolution, because no one who does not know or has forgotten the gulf that only so recently had separated civil and military Russia, who has forgotten the relations between the lower and upper ranks as late as January, 1917, can understand the main cause of the horrible tragedy which developed in the army and navy with the downfall of the autocracy.

The old officers, who are now so embittered and inclined to curse the Revolution and every one and everything concerned with it, should find the moral

THE CATASTROPHE

courage to look into the past without prejudice and try to find there the answer to the terrible question—"Why?" I do not refer to the officers who came into the army during the War. I speak of the officer class that emanated from the old Cadet Corps.

No one able to think even a little can fail to understand that the officers who suffered so grievously from the anarchy in the Revolution were, perhaps, least to be blamed for the dark aspects of the soldier's life under the autocracy. The officers themselves could not escape from the clutches of the system and rebuild the army in accordance with their own ideas. Brought up from childhood under the old system of education and amidst their peculiar surroundings and traditions, they had carried out orders from above passively, trying to think as little as possible when they felt that these orders were in contradiction with the higher duties of efficiency and honor. All this is true. But the officers themselves should realize how it came to pass that the soldier sought to express his satisfaction with the downfall of the system not in mere abstract realization but in revenge upon his nearest chiefs. What is needed is a little more analysis, a little more broadmindedness and a little self-criticism. One cannot ascribe everything to the ill will of separate individuals, one cannot explain everything by pointing to the propaganda which turned the soldiers against the officers. All this did exist, but it was not the main thing, not even the secondary factor. The main cause lay in the past, in the whole feudal army system, in the cruel, artificial relations between the officers and men. The main cause of the human tragedy in the army after the Revolution must be sought in the barrack interiors as they existed before the Revolution.

And also: One must not idealize that past, as

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

many are now inclined to do. It was a sad, an accursed past. Unfortunately, the masses do not deliberate. They cannot grasp and explain quickly new phenomena, especially if old forms, old appearances remain, as they necessarily must. The masses of the army rank and file had too long been accustomed to see in the officer the symbol of the system of oppression, and they could not, therefore, suppress immediately the instinctive desire for a bloody sequel. Still, in the army this desire expressed itself in comparatively weak form.* In the army the officer suffered rather because he was a noble, or a bourgeois, than because he was an officer.

The contrary was true in the fleet. And the explanation of this lies not in the fact that the navy crews were politically more class conscious than the army masses, nor in the fact that in a revolution the fleet goes to greater extremes than the army (it is sufficient to recall the events in the fleet during the great French Revolution and the revolutions in Russia and Germany). No, I attribute the particularly difficult position of the officers in the fleet, especially in the Baltic Fleet, to the fact that contrary to the situation in the army, the entire naval officer corps remained almost intact throughout the War. The regular officer corps in the army was very quickly diluted in the mass of reserve and militia officers, and it melted away still quicker in the fire of the bloody battles early in the War. The active campaigning, the stream of new impressions constantly flowing into the minds of the troops contributed to the eradication of old grievances in the hearts of many soldiers. The fleet remained almost untouched and unchanged by the War. With the exception of minor shifts in personnel and the presence of naval reservists called into service with

THE CATASTROPHE

the outbreak of the War, few changes occurred. When the thunderbolt of revolution struck in the navy there was no place for people to go, where to hide from old, painful questions, from old grievances and the peril of long-postponed reckonings. On the contrary, with each succeeding hour and each succeeding day everything served to recall to mind the bitter past. I am quite certain that had not the general crash come on March twelfth there would have been a great mutiny in the fleet before the end of the summer. The entire atmosphere in the fleet, so far as the men were concerned, was surcharged with electricity. If in the army there remained some semblance of authority and discipline, in the navy these disappeared altogether immediately upon the collapse of the old régime. If in the army the commanders and officers were put merely under control, in the navy they were taken at once by the crews under open or secret suspicion. The officers' quarters were immediately transformed into prison cells by the crew committees.

A navy officer said to me:

"On the morning of the Revolution I summoned my men, informed them of the upheaval, declared that the officers had joined the Revolution and had placed themselves under the authority of the Temporary Committee of the Duma, and requested the men to do likewise. The men replied: 'All right, as you command, your honor.' On the same day, in the evening, the crews summoned me, demanded the surrender of my sword, declared their allegiance to the Soviet of Workmen and Soldiers and proclaimed the authority of their own committee on the ship."

All this, accompanied by the slaughter of officers, took place on March thirteenth or fourteenth, before the issuance of the much discussed "Order No. 1."

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

Generally speaking, the developments in the Baltic Fleet illustrate well the spontaneity of the movement against the officers. Here everything happened before any instructions or directions could arrive from any revolutionary center in Petrograd. It is necessary, once and for all, to put an end to the silly legend that the collapse of authority and discipline in the army and navy, with all its tragic accompaniments, followed upon some signal from the Soviet of Workmen and Soldiers or from me personally in agreement with the Soviet. All this is nonsense and invention.

The anarchy in the army was already a fact when the Provisional Government assumed power on March sixteenth. This was true also of the entire country. The Provisional Government did not create the anarchy, but had only to deal with its consequences. Neither did the Soviet of Workmen and Soldiers play any conscious part in fomenting the disintegration or in the movement against the officers. I emphasize the word "conscious" because the Soviet did make some fatal mistakes, due, however, to the conditions prevailing in the Petrograd garrison in the first days of the Revolution, mistakes which had grievous repercussions in the entire army.

I have already mentioned these conditions in passing, in my description of the first four days of the Revolution. I wish now to come back to them in detail. I spoke of the disappearance of all officers from the barracks in Petrograd with the outbreak of the garrison's revolt. I want to show now how this fact was reflected in the consciousness and action of all the revolutionary leaders in the Tauride Palace, from Rodzianko to Stekloff inclusively. One must not forget that although the Revolution destroyed Czarism with-

THE CATASTROPHE

out difficulty and without serious resistance, the actual difficulties and possibilities of the situation could not have been known to us in the Tauride Palace on that day of March twelfth, when everything was in a state of flux and uncertainty. It was impossible for us under the circumstances to have any clear conception of the progress and probable outcome of the struggle. We even did not know what was happening outside of Petrograd, nor were we certain of whether the capital itself was ours. We had no idea of the plans of the old government, nor had we any positive knowledge of the attitude of the officers, especially those in the rear. Nor did we have any means of finding out what the disappearance of the commanding body of the Petrograd garrison meant. Was it fear, perplexity, a passive withdrawal from the scene in watchful waiting upon developments, or was it something worse?

The entire Tauride Palace did not trust the Petrograd officers in the first moment of the Revolution. This is a positive historical fact.

Note the spirit and contents of orders and declarations issued by men belonging to that wing of the Revolution quite opposite to the one occupied by the Soviet. For instance, on March twelfth, Rodzianko issued instructions "to the officers of the Petrograd garrison and to all officers now in Petrograd," calling upon them to report, not later than March fifteenth, to the Military Commission of the Duma "to obtain passports for unrestricted movement, to register and to carry out the orders of the Commission with regard to the organization of the troops who have joined the people's representatives for the defense of the metropolis."

Rodzianko's instructions continued:

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

Any delay in the appearance of officers will unavoidably prejudice the interests of the officer class. At this moment, in the face of the enemy striking at the very heart of Russia and ready to take advantage of her momentary weakness, it is urgently necessary to make all efforts to restore the organization of all military units. The blood of our comrades who have fallen in the past two and a half years of the War places a duty upon us. Gentlemen officers do not lose a single minute of precious time.

On the same day appeared the declaration of Colonel Engelhardt, temporary commander of the Petrograd garrison, which ran as follows:

Owing to rumors alleging that officers in the regiments are depriving the soldiers of arms, which rumors, after investigation in two regiments, have proven groundless, the commander of the Petrograd garrison hereby declares that the most decisive measures will be taken to prevent such action by officers, not excluding the execution of those guilty.

"ORDER NO. 1"

It was at this very time of complete absence of authority in the Petrograd garrison that there appeared the famous "Order No. 1," which has created so much stormy discussion. It remains to this day one of the chief points of accusation on the part of the Russian reactionaries against the Provisional Government. "Order No. 1," they maintain, promulgated allegedly by the government, destroyed the army.

The truth of the matter is as follows:

Late in the evening, March fourteenth, a delegation

THE CATASTROPHE

of the newly formed soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet appeared before the aforementioned Colonel Engelhardt, a colonel of the General Staff and a member of the Duma, at the office of the Military Commission of the Duma. The soldier delegates requested the colonel to collaborate with them in formulating an order to the tens of thousands of troops of the Petrograd garrison, who had no idea of how to conduct themselves, having been deprived suddenly of their commanders.

Following consultation with some members of the Military Commission, Colonel Engelhardt refused to take a hand in drafting the order, it being his opinion that the first order to the troops of the Petrograd military district should be left to the new minister of war, who, he believed, was to assume his duties within a day or two.

Engelhardt's refusal produced a vexing impression upon the soldier delegates. They left him with words of defiance: "Very well, if you refuse, we'll draft it ourselves."

On the same night, in the tense atmosphere of the Tauride Palace, "Order No. 1" was drawn up at a casual meeting of the Soviet. In the morning it was published. This hothouse product of the soldier mind, created in coöperation with some civilian members of the Soviet, who merely edited the grammar of the soldiers' demands, was from a military point of view not only unsuccessful but also detrimental. Nevertheless, it corresponded to the Petrograd atmosphere of the moment. So far as the officers were concerned it was considerably milder than the aforementioned order threatening executions issued by Colonel Engelhardt, chairman of the Military Commission of the Duma, a

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

political figure belonging to the most conservative wing of the revolutionary upheaval.

Here is the text of "Order No. 1":

March 14, 1917. To the garrison of the Petrograd Military Police. To all soldiers of the Guards, the army, the artillery, and to the navy, for immediate and precise execution, and for the information of the workers of Petrograd:

1. All companies, battalions, regiments, artillery parks, batteries and individual units of all categories and on vessels of the navy are to choose committees of elected representatives from the rank and file of the aforementioned military units.

2. All military units which have not yet chosen representatives to the Soviet of Workmen's Deputies are to do so, on the basis of one representative for each company, who is to appear with a written certificate in the Duma building, at ten o'clock in the morning, March seventeenth.

3. In all their political activities military units are to regard themselves as subordinate to the Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies and to their respective committees.

4. All kinds of arms, such as rifles, guns, armored automobiles, etc., must remain in the hands and under the control of district and battalion committees and must under no circumstances be placed at the disposal of officers, even upon their demand.

5. In the execution of their service duties and in their respective units, soldiers must maintain the strictest military discipline, but outside the service, in their political, civic and private life, soldiers cannot in any way be restricted in their rights, such as are enjoyed by citizens.

6. Simultaneously, all titles in addressing officers are abolished, such as "Your Excellency,"

THE CATASTROPHE

"Your Honor," etc., being substituted by the salutation: "Mr. General," "Mr. Colonel," etc. Impolite and rough behavior towards soldiers on the part of officers of all ranks, including the salutation "thou," is forbidden, and all violations of this, as well as all misunderstandings between officers and soldiers are to be brought by the latter to the attention of the company committees.

The present order is to be read to all companies, battalions, regiments, crews, batteries and other commands.

(Signed) PETROGRAD SOVIET OF
WORKMEN'S AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES

This complete text of the order destroys, first of all, the legend concerning the participation of the Provisional Government in its formulation, for the Provisional Government was formed on the night of March fifteenth, whereas the order was written on the night of March fourteenth. Second, as will be seen from the heading of the order, it applied exclusively to the troops of the Petrograd garrison, and, finally, the order contains no reference whatever to the right of the soldiers to "choose" their commanders, but, on the contrary, it summons the soldiers to the "strictest military discipline" while on duty.

So far as the newly proclaimed civil rights of the soldiers are concerned, the order was likewise in harmony with the spirit of the first days of the Revolution. In proof it is only necessary to cite the eighth point of the manifesto issued by the Provisional Government upon its assumption of office. This manifesto, representing the basic program of the new government, was signed by Rodzianko as president of the Duma, Premier Lvoff and all the ministers. The point in question read:

RESTORATION OF THE FRONT

"Hand in hand with the preservation of the strictest military discipline in the ranks and in the exercise of military duty, all limitations circumscribing the enjoyment of civil rights by soldiers are abolished."

Even the creation of elected committees and their representation in the Soviet was not the result of any one's personal or party notions, but was the expression of the general attitude, cropping up at times in quarters where it was most unexpected. The same Colonel Engelhardt in his first communication to the garrison wrote:

"It is suggested to all troops of the Petrograd garrison to introduce immediately in their units a system based on new principles. Each unit is to delegate to the Military Commission of the Duma one representative from the officers and men, accompanied by certification of his identity."

I have just mentioned that in the Baltic Fleet the committees appeared before the promulgation and, at any rate, before the receipt at Helsingfors of "Order No. 1." On the Rumanian Front, very distant from Petrograd, there developed a circumstance even more characteristic, proving vividly that the Russian army, after the destruction of the old administrative apparatus, had to pass inevitably through some sort of a new phase on the basis of "new principles." There, the commander of the sixth army, General Tsurikoff, without awaiting instructions from Petrograd, introduced the committee system among the troops and telegraphed to the authorities in the capital urging the desirability of the measure, in the light of circumstances.

But the historical inevitability of developments does not, of course, affect the attitude assumed towards them by contemporaries. A report from General

THE CATASTROPHE

Alexeyeff, from General Headquarters, received on the second or third day of the life of the Provisional Government, to the effect that "Order No. 1" (wired to the front by persons whose identity has never been discovered) was creating great mischief all along the line, provoked an immediate reaction in the cabinet.

On March nineteenth, Premier Lvoff and War Minister Gutchkoff published a proclamation to the army, making it clear that "Order No. 1" was not meant for the army as a whole and that the troops must give obedience only to the orders and instructions of their commanders, acting under the authority of the new government. A similar communication was addressed to the army by the Petrograd Soviet, signed by Vice-President Skobelev, a Social-Democrat, and countersigned by Gutchkoff. In addition, the Petrograd Soviet promulgated the so-called "Order No. 2," which stated clearly that the Soviet had issued no instructions regarding the election of officers and that "Order No. 1," promulgated previous to the formation of the Provisional Government, concerned only the troops of the Petrograd district. Such are the facts.

The legend concerning "Order No. 1," formed and circulated subsequently, is simply evidence of how people, stricken and shaken by extraordinary events, cannot refrain from trying to find concrete and detachable sources of their misfortunes. To them the whole tragic history of the disintegration of the old, imperial Russian army is simply the result of some one's deliberate plans, of the mischief and intrigues—of the Soviet, the Provisional Government, Kerensky, etc.

CHAPTER VI

DISSOLUTION OF THE ARMY

JUST as the old administrative machinery disappeared suddenly, unexpectedly, almost miraculously, in the country, so were the millions at the front left without a governing apparatus. The very spirit of the army was gone and its heart—the moving force of the word of command—ceased to beat.

Immediately after the Revolution the Russian army ceased to fight, for the soldiers ceased to obey and the officers lost the capacity to command. The power and authority of the officers disappeared.

All those who had the opportunity to observe the Russian Front in the last year before the Revolution, all those who had any more or less clear conception of the atmosphere at the front felt the deadly peril that was advancing upon the army together with the dissolution of the old régime. But no one expected all these symptoms of exhaustion and decay to culminate in the shocking picture of chaos that arose after the Revolution.

Of course, one must not paint the entire Russian Front as it appeared after the March explosion in one shade of black. Those troops who had won victories in the past or who had as commanders men of the less reactionary type, men who had shown sympathy with the more progressive circles of the country and had fought for the liberation of the government from the meshes of Rasputin, as well as the troops farthest re-

THE CATASTROPHE

moved from the poisonous influence of Petrograd—in the Caucasus, in the Southwest (Galicia), in Rumania, and the Black Sea Fleet—preserved their organization and their fighting capacity.

In every individual army the measure of dissolution was likewise uneven. As a rule, the artillery and all the specialized branches, containing the more intelligent and cultural elements of the army, the elements that had been regarded with suspicion under the old régime, remained after the Revolution but little touched by the wave of disintegration, or, if disintegration did appear, the process was a slow one.

Above all, it was the infantry which lost the capacity to fight and to obey. This is explainable. First of all, the Russian infantry in 1916-17, following the terrible defeats of 1914-15, no longer represented a regular army, but a poorly trained militia. The various infantry divisions were no longer coordinated harmonious bodies. The raw recruits from the villages, who had found their way hurriedly and accidentally into the various regiments, had no knowledge or conception of their respective regimental traditions. Frequently this was the case also with the commanders, the wartime lieutenants, who, after two or three months of ephemeral training, were hurled from their student desks or office swivel chairs into leadership of the strange gray masses of soldiery.

But even in the infantry the measure of disorganization was varied. The principal fields for the disintegrating propaganda and activity of Bolshevik and German agents were the so-called "third" divisions, the formation of which was begun in January, 1917. The transformation of the army corps on the basis of three instead of two divisions to a corps—a most unfortunate reform, which had met with sharp disapproval

DISSOLUTION OF THE ARMY

from General Alexeyeff and the majority of the General Staff officers—was carried out by General Gurko, temporary chief of staff of the commander-in-chief, the Emperor Nicholas II, at the time when General Alexeyeff was on furlough in the Crimea because of illness. These “third” divisions, consisting of units of which commanders of already existing divisions had sought to rid themselves, because of their uselessness, represented accidental masses of people without any organization and discipline, and operating under the very poorest material and technical conditions. Subsequently, during my inspection of the various fronts, I heard loud complaints against these accursed “third” divisions, which had become the carriers of cowardice, anarchy and disintegration. It was in the infantry where the Bolshevik and German agents concentrated their work. Only here did they have any real success. Only the very darkest, most ignorant and out and out reactionary sections of the Russian army came to the assistance of these worst enemies of Free Russia. Here all the slogans of the Revolution merged into one solid, brutal roar: “To the devil with the War! Let us go home! You have drunk enough of our blood!” The only language which these lower depths of the army could understand was the language of force. And as soon as this force was restored by the Provisional Government, it was put into effect.

DREAMS OF PEACE

But, at the beginning, in the first weeks of the Revolution, there were also other sentiments, in the army, as well as among the people. Russia was not only physically tired of the War; New Russia revolted spiritually against further bloodshed. She sought, per-

THE CATASTROPHE

haps naïvely, but honestly and sincerely, a way out of the seemingly hopeless *impasse* into which all warring Europe had fallen.

To many revolutionary enthusiasts, in the rear as well as at the front, it appeared only natural that the Russian Revolution, having freed Russia from all the evils of the old régime, would bring spiritual emancipation to the rest of suffering humanity. An immediate and fair peace for all the belligerent nations was the unrealizable but luring, almost hypnotic, struggle dominating the heart.

On March twenty-seventh the Petrograd Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies voted its celebrated "Address to all Peoples of the World," with an appeal for action for immediate peace. "It will come!" was the confident promise. For only the "imperialist governments" were at war with one another, while the peoples were compelled merely to obey. Now that the Russian democracy has entered as an "equal" into the "family of free peoples," it has renounced all the imperialist past of Czarist Russia. There is nothing, therefore, to prevent other peoples, acting "over the heads of their governments," from following the example of Free Russia and putting an end to the fratricidal slaughter. And, first of all, must Germany do away with her imperialist reaction. Wilhelm must be deposed, thus piercing the heart of world imperialism. And then, in the blinding light of truth and justice, will the new sun of peace and love ascend over Europe. The enemies of yesterday will unite in fraternal embrace. Thus ran the appeal of the Soviet.

To the Western world these words appeared to be naïve, childish prattle. There not only the governments but the peoples themselves were engaged in a

war to the death. They saw no way out of the war through revolution at home. The representatives of Russia's Soviet democracy soon learned this from the lips of Socialists and Laborites who had come to visit us from Paris and London. They soon learned that their struggle for peace, if it was to be successful, must needs be founded not on rhetoric but upon the solid force of a restored front. However, already on March twenty-seventh, at the moment of the greatest infatuation with the faith in a European miracle, the leaders of the Russian proletarian democracy began to feel certain disquieting misgivings. They called upon the German workers to follow the example of their Russian comrades and put an end to the absolutism of the Hohenzollerns. But apparently they were not quite sure that their appeal would be heard, for among the pleading words of the Soviet's address there resounds unexpectedly the cry of warning: "The Russian Revolution will not retreat before the bayonets of conquerors and will not permit itself to be crushed by outside military power."

"Peace" with Ludendorff! But imperialist Germany, dominated by the dictatorship of Ludendorff, had no intention of threatening the "democratic conquests" of the Russian Revolution by resorting to "bayonets." The German General Staff was well informed about the sentiments of the Russian democracy and the rank and file of the Russian army in the first weeks of the Revolution. We find it, therefore, changing its strategy on the Eastern Front with a speed and farsightedness worthy of a genius. Instead of directing its heavy artillery and the blows of bayonets against Russia, it let loose a storm of proclamations more poisonous than the most poisonous gases.

THE CATASTROPHE

The Russian Revolution wants peace. Then why tarry? Why overthrow Wilhelm when His Royal Highness, Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria himself, Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Front, thinks of nothing else than helping the Russian workers and peasants, attired in soldier uniforms, the Russian proletarians oppressed by their own and the Anglo-French capitalists, to throw off the hated yoke of the international bankers, and by establishing firmly the reign of the toiling masses in Russia to bring eternal peace between Russia and Germany.

These were the actual contents of the German proclamations distributed among the Russian troops.

The proclamations of His Royal Highness to the Russian troops were not the only means utilized by the Germans in conveying their promise that not a single shot would be fired by the Germans without the provocation of an offensive by the Russians. Imperial Germany carried still further her diabolical play on the primitive *naïveté* of the Russian soldiers. Here and there from the German trenches "peace delegations," bearing white flags, moved towards the Russians. These "delegations" were driven away by Russian artillery fire. This provoked indignation in the Russian trenches, while new German proclamations spared no words of righteous wrath against the unwillingness of the Russian generals to give ear to Germany's peace proposals. General Dragomiroff then gave orders to receive one such German delegation and bring it before him. In the presence of delegates from the army committees the chief German parliamentarian was questioned. He had, of course, no peace proposal to make.

This local episode, however, passed by without salutary effect. Having provided themselves with such a

DISSOLUTION OF THE ARMY

powerful ally in their struggle for "peace at any price" our soldiers met every effort of their commanders to move them to action with indescribable resentment.

The Russian Front grew still. A gravelike silence ensued along the hundreds of miles of our lines. Russian soldiers were received as guests by the Germans. A wave of fraternization ensued, accompanied by interminable meetings. There was plenty of time for that, for the Russian troops refused even to clean their rifles. A virtual armistice was established on the Russian Front, while the friends of the Russian Revolution in the German General Staff were hurrying their Eastern divisions to the French Front.

STOKHOD

It is difficult to say what the result of this situation might have been. But in the very midst of the game staged by the Germans there occurred a slight mistake. The heyday of the touching friendship between Prince Rupprecht and General Ludendorff with our illiterate Russian peasants in the trenches came to a sudden end.

At the moment of the greatest inactivity on the Russian Front the German troops suddenly assumed the offensive on the Stokhod. The quick blow produced great results. The Russian regiments, far removed from any idea of fighting, were caught unawares. Great masses of artillery and 25,000 prisoners constituted the German booty—the first result of the "struggle for peace" through fraternization, carried on in accordance with the instructions of Ludendorff and Lenin.

The impression produced by the Stokhod attack on that portion of the Russian democracy which was sin-

THE CATASTROPHE

cerely engaged in the struggle for an immediate, just peace was in truth shattering. Ludendorff, as he himself admits in his memoirs, quickly perceived the mistake of the German High Command. At German Headquarters it was decided not to permit the repetition of unfortunate accidents. There will be no more German attacks on the Russian Front, was the information conveyed to our trenches by the German command. This promise was kept by Ludendorff.

However, fortunately for us, the impression produced by the Stokhod offensive could not be eradicated. Somewhere in the subconsciousness of the soul of the Russian democracy occurred a deep and profound change.

With the Stokhod attack ended what may be called the pacifist period of the Russian Revolution. A new period, the period of defense, began. The Russian Revolution itself, and not the "imperialist" Provisional Government alone, determined to continue the War as long as circumstances demanded it. Of course, this new psychology of defense, which began to develop in the consciousness of the masses, did not appear in full force immediately after the Stokhod attack. On the contrary, the outer picture of the situation at the front and in the rear seemed more hopeless than ever and insoluble. At any rate, it was thus that the situation was regarded by Alexander Gutchkoff, the first war minister of the Provisional Government, and by his closest associates.

CHAPTER VII

GUTCHKOFF

ALEXANDER GUTCHKOFF was one of the most colorful and interesting political figures of pre-revolutionary Russia. A prominent social and commercial leader of Moscow, a typical representative of the Moscow merchant world, Gutchkoff was to a large extent a self-made man. His career was most original. In the Boer War he dropped his business and went to fight on the side of the Boers. In the Russo-Japanese War he covered Manchuria as a representative of the Red Cross and there had opportunity to observe the defects of the old Russian bureaucratic military machine. A participant in the moderate liberation movement, the height of the revolutionary disturbances of 1905 found him on the right flank of the zemstvo and municipal reform organizations. Breaking with the liberals of the type of Miliukoff, he became the leader of the conservative Octobrist party (the first constitutional manifesto of Nicholas II was issued October 17, 1905).

This party became the constitutional support of the Stolypin government after the dissolution of the first Duma, in the summer of 1906, and the suppression of the popular anti-government movement. Gutchkoff himself assumed the rôle of intimate friend and adviser of the all-powerful premier.

In the ultra-conservative third Duma he was elected president, and as such had opportunity to study closely

THE CATASTROPHE

not only the bureaucratic apparatus of the Russian empire, but the Czar himself and his *entourage*. Independent and courageous, possessed of great political intuition, Gutchkoff entered upon a sharp struggle with the "dark forces" surrounding the throne, directed at first against the irresponsible influence of the Grand Dukes, then against the all-powerful Rasputin.

Gutchkoff concentrated his energy mainly on questions of a military nature. Soon there formed around him a circle of capable young officers of the General Staff. This provoked suspicion and bitter hostility at the Court. The military figures close to Gutchkoff were nicknamed by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna the "Young Turks." These "Young Turks" (including the generals Gurko and Polivanoff), together with several members of the Duma, accomplished a great deal for the reorganization of the Russian army and the improvement of the national defense.

But in time Gutchkoff and his friends became convinced that further serious work in the interest of the nation, particularly for the national defense, was well-nigh impossible under the existing régime.

The appointment of the utterly incapable Sukhomlinoff to the post of war minister, the constantly growing influence of the semi-illiterate peasant, Rasputin, in the handling of the most fundamental problems of the state, killed all hope in Gutchkoff for a peaceful, evolutionary solution of the constantly growing crisis of absolutism.

Nevertheless Gutchkoff did not desire to see the rise of an elemental revolutionary mass movement. Openly proclaiming his uncompromising hostility to the existing régime, the Octobrist leader stood aloof, however, from the country's growing revolutionary tendencies. He disapproved of them. In his opinion

GUTCHKOFF

revolutionary chaos could be averted only by a struggle for political power on the part of the moderate and conservatively liberal middle classes of Russian society. Already before the War, in 1913, in the period of the fourth Duma, he summoned his party to this struggle. At the beginning of the War Gutchkoff appeared in East Prussia as a representative of the Red Cross. There he witnessed the first catastrophe of the Russian army and saw the destruction, near Soldan, of General Samsonoff's entire army and the crushing of the finest Guard Regiments, due to the criminal inefficiency and negligence of General Rennenkampf.

When he delivered his parting address, as minister of war in the Provisional Government, before the conference of delegates from the front, in the Tauride Palace, on April twelfth, Gutchkoff said:

"Already, in the autumn of 1914, I returned from the front a revolutionist."

Testifying before the Extraordinary Inquiry Commission of the Provisional Government, on August 15, 1917, Gutchkoff declared:

"When in the months preceding the Revolution some of my friends and I sought a way out of the situation, we believed that it was impossible under the existing circumstances to bring about, in any normal way, a change in the government and its reconstruction by the enlistment of public men commanding the confidence of the country, and that it was necessary to make a sharp turn in the direction of the removal of him who wielded supreme power. Too much guilt had accumulated on the shoulders of the Emperor, the Empress and those inextricably bound to them. Their characters gave no hope of the possibility of moving them to a wholesome political change. All this made it clear to me that the Emperor must vacate his throne."

THE CATASTROPHE

In the winter of 1916-17 Gutchkoff was not merely thinking of revolt but was actively engaged in preparing it in cooperation with M. I. Terestchenko, a noted millionaire and philanthropist and the future minister of foreign affairs in the Provisional Government. Together with General Krimoff, organizer of the subsequent Korniloff rebellion, he promoted plans for a coup d'état, sensing the advance of a catastrophe. The execution of the plans was delayed, and instead of a change of the reigning monarchs, the entire dynasty was swept away by the uprising of the people.

It was naturally impossible after that for Gutchkoff and his friends to remain aloof from the Revolution.

With this moment began Gutchkoff's personal tragedy which, however, exemplified with particular clarity the tragedy experienced by all the people of his circle and his class in the Revolution.

They had expected a political upheaval which, by changing the system of government, was to transfer all political power into the hands of the centrist, the moderate-conservative and liberal elements of Russian society, which up until March 12, 1917, dominated the whole political life of the country, in the Duma, in the zemstvos, in the cities and in the press. Instead, Russia went through a social earthquake, which shook and shattered all the strata of the social order. Not only the conservative part but the whole of liberal Russia suddenly appeared as a mere fragmentary remnant of the destroyed monarchy. A new force, the democracy, and not so much the political, as the social and labor democracy, came into power, although it was not yet able to take this power into its hands.

In the chaos of the new political tendencies and aspirations, which were only beginning to take form,

GUTCHKOFF

Gutchkoff found himself alone, a stranger to all. He himself did not think of his past, but many others did, for in the broad, popular historical consciousness Gutchkoff was remembered mostly as the instigator of the cruel Stolypin reaction which followed upon the dissolution of the first Duma.

Before the Revolution the object of an uncompromising hatred on the part of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, Rasputin and Vyroubova, Gutchkoff after the Revolution immediately fell under the suspicion of the representatives of the Soviet democracy and their adherents. Yet the basic problem of the state after the Revolution consisted in the quickest possible restoration of authority in the land. An old, traditional government can continue, for a long time, to govern the state by mere mechanical force and inertia of the administrative apparatus. But here, too, a psychological break with the population, the absence of confidence in the government and in the genuineness of its intentions, in the long run bring about the end experienced by France in 1789, by Russia in 1917 and by Germany in 1918. But a government born of revolution or of a coup d'état—it makes no difference which—and not possessing as yet any apparatus of compulsion, exists in reality only in so far as it finds a living contact with the country, only in so far as it is trusted by the people themselves and its orders and instructions are accepted by the millions not because of the conviction of force but by the force of conviction.

The austere, retiring, strange and uncouth Gutchkoff was least of all capable of convincing the multitude. He was not believed, and he realized this painfully.

Between Gutchkoff, as war minister, and the army there developed at once an unhealthy and abnormal re-

THE CATASTROPHE

lationship. It had been the belief that Gutchkoff, being close to high army circles (at any rate to many of the more talented officers of the General Staff), would administer the army well. It soon became clear, however, that what was necessary was not the usual kind of administration on the basis of the accepted principles of command and obedience, but first and foremost the restoration of the lost authority of the officers. It was necessary to place between subordinates and commanders, between the soldier and the officer, some kind of a third, connecting force. To do this it was essential first to gain the confidence of the troops. How was this to be done? As Gutchkoff saw it, it was to be done by deeds, by showing that the first war minister of the Revolution stood for a new order in the army.

MILITARY REFORMS

All the so-called reforms in the army, after the Revolution, were carried out during Gutchkoff's incumbency of the War Ministry, in cooperation with a special commission which included representatives of the Soviet and army committees, and was headed by General Polivanoff, who had been for a time minister of war during the War and the assistant war minister under the third Duma.

Polivanoff, as I have already indicated, was a member of Gutchkoff's circle. For that reason he had been regarded at Court with unconcealed hostility. A man of unquestionable ability and a brilliant administrator, Polivanoff, after sensing the prevailing revolutionary sentiments, joined Gutchkoff in the struggle for the restoration of the discipline and fighting capacity of the army, but with methods extremely dangerous. He

GUTCHKOFF

set out to gain the confidence of the troops in the new War Minister by the maximum of possible and, sometimes, impossible concessions to demands presented not so much by committees from the front, as by the Petrograd Soviet. In these concessions Polivanoff went further than the War Minister.

In reality, all the reforms promoted by Gutchkoff and Polivanoff constituted merely the affirmation of what was already the existing order in the army after the Revolution. Naturally, the registration of all the revolutionary "conquests" in the army, as reflected in the work of Polivanoff's commission and the revolutionary orders of the War Minister, did not raise by a single iota the authority in the army of the representatives of the new government.

I repeat: the crux of the situation lay not in reforms but in the want of confidence in the new government. In the absence of the moral authority necessary to force a change in the sentiments of the masses there remained only the solution of drifting along with the current, in the hope that somehow, by means of some miracle, a "strong" man would appear, who, at one or two blows, supporting himself upon two or three old, solid traditions of his regiments, would disperse this whole "revolutionary canaille."

But the "strong" man was not in sight. General Korniloff, appointed the first commander of the Petrograd military district, was unable to handle the garrison, and early in May he returned to the front. Meanwhile the policy of adjustment even to the most moderate demands of the rank and file of the army, which had lost all equilibrium, was destroying the authority of Gutchkoff and Polivanoff in those circles where they could possibly have had it—the high command of the army.

THE CATASTROPHE

GUTCHKOFF'S RESIGNATION

After two months of tragic misunderstanding Gutchkoff and his military assistants found themselves in an *impasse*. There were no more moves left for them. The final fruit of Polivanoff's creation—"the Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers"—already actually in force, was rejected by Gutchkoff, who refused to sign it. As a matter of fact the declaration was an artificial attempt to steer the sentiments of the army in the only way Gutchkoff could follow.

On his own initiative, without informing the Provisional Government, the Minister of War called a conference of all the army commanders, headed by General Alexeyeff, as commander-in-chief. The conference, which was to meet on or about May fifteenth, was to express its confidence in the War Minister who was about to resign, in a form closely resembling an ultimatum.

On May twelfth, exactly two months after the official beginning of the Revolution, Gutchkoff submitted his resignation in a letter to Prince Lvoff, the Premier. The letter produced a very painful impression on the public. Its main point was that the Minister of War could no longer carry the responsibility for the further destruction of the country. On the same day, in his final address as war minister, before the first conference of delegates from the front, Gutchkoff drew a shocking picture of the past and present of the Russian army, expressing his despair frankly and courageously. It would be sheer madness, he declared, to follow any longer the road taken by the Russian Revolution in the first two months. Speaking of the reforms in the army, the departing minister admitted openly: "We have

GUTCHKOFF

now reached the fatal point beyond which lies not the rehabilitation of the army but its destruction."

I must say that despite the difference in our political past and our position in the Revolution I did not want Gutchkoff's departure, for I valued in him his great political intuition and the ability to approach the solution of political problems in a manner free from all dogmatic and partisan considerations. Only such men were then needed in Russia. The psychological change which had begun to mature in the soul of the revolutionary democracy after the experience on the Stokhod, gave me firm confidence that together with the healthy development of a national consciousness in the masses would come also the strengthening of confidence in the War Minister.

Accidentally, on May twelfth, as I was on my way to a meeting of the conference of delegates from the front, at which Gutchkoff was to speak, my automobile overtook that of Gutchkoff and I decided to make an effort to persuade Gutchkoff not to leave the Provisional Government. I changed into his machine and began to plead with him. But my pleading was in vain.

Nothing came of the second part of Gutchkoff's strategic maneuver. He resigned, but the conference of army commanders, which met in Petrograd, May sixteenth to seventeenth, refused to support Gutchkoff in his complaints against the Provisional Government. This first effort to bring the "strong will" of the fighting generals to bear upon the "lack of will-power" of the revolutionary government failed.

MY FIRST DAYS IN THE WAR MINISTRY

However, this effort did not end favorably for me. I was compelled to assume the war portfolio, with

THE CATASTROPHE

the difficult legacy left behind by Polivanoff and Gutchkoff. I realize now that it was perhaps the premonition of this, my greatest trial, which prompted me in my effort to prevail upon Gutchkoff not to leave the Provisional Government. Of course, if there had been a single man among the commanders at the front possessing the unqualified confidence of the rank and file, the question of finding a successor to Gutchkoff would have been easily settled. But the modern war of anonymous *communiqués* had not produced such a hero. General Headquarters, headed by General Alexeyeff, as well as the entire commanding corps, demanded the appointment of a civilian as war minister.

Does not this demand of the generals illustrate better than anything else the abnormality of the position occupied at that time by the army commanders at the front and the fact that they themselves understood it? What was required then was a buffer between the commanding corps and the rank and file. It became my fate to be the buffer, with all the inevitable consequences confronting any one who puts his head between the hammer and the anvil.

But there was no time to do much thinking then. Moreover, all considerations were quickly ended. In reply to the question of Prince Lvoff as to whom, among the civilians available, the high command would recommend for the War Ministry, General Alexeyeff replied: "The first candidate of the high command is Kerensky."

The task placed upon me as War Minister by the Provisional Government was in brief this: restoration by all means at hand of the fighting capacity of the army. To accomplish this I was to move the army to an offensive, sparing no efforts.

Of course my task would have been quite impossible

GUTCHKOFF

if at that time, in the middle of May, there had not appeared in the masses the marked evidences of the deep psychological change produced by the Stokhod experience. The resolutions of various Soviets, army committees and the declarations of delegations arriving in Petrograd from the front, all spoke of but one thing: the imperative need of restoring the fighting capacity of the army and the productive capacity of the workers, as essential prerequisites to the defense of the country.

To be sure, these healthy political and national tendencies did not affect all the active forces of the nation. The propaganda of the Bolsheviki and the work of German agents—which frequently meant one and the same thing—the war weariness and, above all, the prolongation of the War, which we could not stop, continued to batter and to shatter the country. A feeling of despair frequently gripped every one of us. Immediately preceding my appointment as minister of war, on the very day of Gutchkoff's resignation, I declared before the same conference of army delegates at which Gutchkoff delivered his swan song:

"Is it really possible that Free Russia is only a country of mutinous slaves? I grieve that I did not die two months ago, in the first hour of the Revolution. For then I would have departed in the belief that a new life had at last come upon Russia, that we had learned to govern our country without the knout and the club, in mutual respect, and not as we used to be governed."

But from such emotion of despair grew and matured, parallel with the forces of dissolution, new social bonds. New creative possibilities were born, summoning all to work and effort. Then possibilities gave us faith in the triumph of reason over the dark madness of some and the deliberate treason of others.

THE CATASTROPHE

On assuming my duties at the War Ministry, I first of all issued an order to the sulking members of the commanding corps forbidding the resignation of any officers of the army in the field. This measure nipped in the bud the intention of certain high commanders to resign by way of protest against the official publication of the "Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers." I believed that discipline was to be demanded first from people who by virtue of their position should have served as models of the performance of duty. Moreover, it was quite impossible to stop publication of the notorious declaration, first, because it had already long been published by the *Izvestia* of the Petrograd Soviet, and second, because Polivanoff and Gutchkoff had made the official and categorical promise to the Soviet and army committees that the declaration would be put into effect, stating that the delay in doing so was due entirely to causes of a technical nature.

After putting a stop to the sulking attitude of the generals, I immediately published the "Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers." But, under my revision of it, the declaration received an interpretation which prompted Lenin, in the *Pravda*, to term it the "Declaration of the Lack of Rights of Soldiers" and to begin a mad campaign against the new war minister. The fourteenth point of the declaration, excluded originally by General Polivanoff, on the demand of the Soviet, but restored by me, declared:

"At times of action the commander has the right to apply any measures, including the use of armed force, against subordinates who fail to obey his orders."

This point was the first move towards restoration of the power and authority of commanders. But even the most courageous officers did not for a long time venture to use this power. In addition to this funda-

mental change, the eighteenth point of the revised declaration placed the right of appointment and removal exclusively in the hands of commanders, and omitted the clause of the Polivanoff original which vested the army committees with the right of recommendation and rejection of appointees. Thus I did away with the right of subordinates to participate in the appointment of their superiors.

Finally, in the very first days of my duties as War Minister, an end was put to the "dual authority" prevailing in the administration of the Petrograd garrison.

During the two months of General Korniloff's service as commander of the Petrograd military district, the Military Commission of the Duma and the soldiers' section of the Soviet exercised jointly the right of control over the Petrograd garrison. All the efforts made by Gutchkoff and Korniloff to put a stop to this truly inadmissible interference of public bodies in the activities of the district military staff resulted in failure. On the contrary, the meddling of the Soviet in the business of the commander grew hand in hand with the growing lack of confidence in the War Minister. General Korniloff made all sorts of concessions to the Soviet. On one occasion he announced in the press that he "does not undertake a serious move in the matter of the inner administration of the garrison without previous agreement with the Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, through the instrumentality of its executive organ." He agreed also to the establishment of a kind of controlling agency by the Soviet, which was attached to the staff. But all this led to nothing. On May twelfth, the day of Gutchkoff's resignation, the Soviet, through the representatives of its executive committee, laid claim to the function of countersigning all orders of the district

THE CATASTROPHE

commander concerning the movement and transfer of troops.

This was the demand that broke General Korniloff's patience. He resigned.

My desire to free the staff of the Petrograd military district from interference by the Soviet was soon carried out.

From the very beginning of the Revolution, the Duma, followed by the Soviet, began dispatching its representatives to the front, where their function was to explain events in Petrograd and help promote contact between the army and the forces of the Revolution. The Duma representatives had little success among the soldiers at the front and they soon ceased their activities. But the Soviet representatives became, to all intents and purposes, Soviet commissars in the army.

This decline of the authority of the Duma's representatives at the front, simultaneously with the rise of the authority of the Soviet's representatives, together with the experience suffered by Colonel Engelhardt, who saw the various regulations and orders promulgated by him paralleled by similar measures by the Soviet, shows that all organizations born of the Revolution resorted to the same measures and that the result was different only because the influence wielded by organizations of the Duma fell, in the course of the revolutionary developments, to zero, while that of the Soviet rose to the boiling point.

The preservation at the front of the institution of Soviet commissars was likewise intolerable, for under the relations which had developed between the rank and file and the officers, the commissars, in the summer of 1917, had to carry altogether too great a responsibility. For that reason these commissars had to be

GUTCHKOFF

made responsible, while at the front, directly to the government. This became a fact with my assumption of the war portfolio.

Finally, in the very first days of my work as Minister of War I stopped the stream of revolutionary reforms emanating from General Polivanoff's commission by the simple device of abolishing it.

My further work in the Ministry of War and Marine consisted in the gradual liquidation of the "revolutionary" measures of General Polivanoff. Beginning with the middle of May, the army began to return gradually to a normal military order.

At first glance my "conservatism," coming upon the "radicalism" of Gutchkoff, may appear paradoxical. As a representative of the Left, the normal procedure would have been for me to pursue a radical policy. But what may appear abnormal under normal conditions, becomes in the abnormal revolutionary situation but a normal development of events. My entrance into the War Ministry marked the end of the period of destruction and the beginning of the period of construction, not only in the army, but in the country as a whole.

All my initial measures were undertaken merely with the object of clearing the field for my basic activity, the bringing about of a sharp change in the attitude and sentiment of the army. This required my presence at the front and not in Petrograd. From the first day of my appointment as Minister of War and up to my assumption of the premiership, after the first Bolshevik uprising, July sixteenth to twentieth, I spent the greater part of my time on various parts of the front, taking no part, on my brief returns to Petrograd, in the work of the Provisional Government so far as internal matters were concerned.

THE CATASTROPHE

It is now the fashion not only in conservative, but also in Bolshevik circles, to refer to me ironically as the "persuader-in-chief."

I do not see anything opprobrious, ridiculous or insulting in this term. For, if I was compelled for weeks at a time to devote myself to the inspection of army after army, corps after corps and division after division, if in addition to the regular work of a war minister at the front I was obliged to waste time in conversations with soldiers and in addresses before thousands of troops, I did so not on my own volition, but on the insistent and, at times, tearful demands of the high commanders.

I remember particularly one incident on the Galician Front, in the region of the eleventh army, involving a certain Guard division. This division was beyond all hope of redemption. What it required was not persuasion but the application of armed force. After inspecting a neighboring division and addressing the troops, I flatly declined to visit the division in question, realizing that it would be a waste of time to enter into discussions with its Bolshevik agitators. The old, gray-haired general, commander of the division, who had come to invite me to visit his command, lost all self-control, grew pale and began to tremble.

"Mr. Minister," he pleaded, "if you do not come they will say it is my fault. There will be no living for me then. In God's name do come to us."

What was there left for me to do, considering my "weakness" and "lack of will-power"? Naturally, I visited the hopelessly infected division and, in the interests of the safety of the commanders, addressed the troops, quite conscious of the uselessness of my effort in this case. Several days later the commissar of the war minister attached to the division, was obliged to

use force in dissolving it, as should have been done from the very beginning.

No doubt the position of the commanders at the front was quite intolerable—to command troops after having lost the capacity to command; to prepare the soldier mass for action at a time when all such preparation was regarded by the soldiers almost as “treason to the new order” and as “counter-revolution”; to be compelled to tolerate the stream of poisonous Bolshevik slander; to feel the suspicion of the representatives of the Soviet democracy—all this was sufficient to undermine the equilibrium of and infuriate any man. Add to this the fact that in the spring of 1917 the Russian officer corps was already undermined and crippled by three years of bitter, unsuccessful fighting and you have some conception of the situation.

The Revolution turned its back on the regular officers. This was perhaps historically inevitable but extremely tragic for those who were compelled to experience it. And it undoubtedly had a fatal effect on the development of the events of the Revolution. The overwhelming majority of Russia's officers took no part in preparing the Revolution. The revolutionary tempest surprised them to a greater extent than was the case with those civilians who were at least in some measure able to sense the political and social sentiments of the country. But, as I have already said, psychologically the officers were prepared for a break with the dynasty. For this reason, although they did not greet the new situation gladly, they accepted it, at any rate, without resistance. Soon after, however, every officer went through what was really a repetition of the spiritual tragedy of Gutchkoff and his immediate assistants. There was, however, one difference, namely—the attitude of distrust on

THE CATASTROPHE

the part of the troops in the trenches towards their officers did not express itself in the resolutions and declarations, but very frequently in direct, brutal and humiliating action.

Losing heart, as General Brusiloff was wont to say, suddenly perceiving in the soldier a strange and even hostile creature, the officers sought the aid of the civilian rear, hoping there to find a new road to the soldier's soul.

More than once did I receive from various commanding generals urgent telegrams requesting the dispatch of a commissar to his troops, indicating at the same time a preference for former "political offenders," who could not possibly be suspected of "counter-revolutionary schemes," even when demanding the restoration of discipline and exhorting the troops to action.

CHAPTER VIII

FIRST VISITS TO THE ARMY

AFTER short trips to the Caucasus Front at the very beginning of the War and to the Western Front in 1915, I again saw the army in May, 1917. Having repaired to some extent the ministerial machine and reorganized the administration of the Petrograd military district, I left, on May twentieth, for the Galician Front, where General Brusiloff was in command.

This front had remained in a better state of preservation than any other after the revolutionary explosion, but here, too, one beheld a terrible picture of destruction. It seemed as if the army had forgotten the enemy and turned its face towards the interior of the country, its attention riveted on what was going on there.

There was neither the crack of machine guns nor the exchange of artillery fire. The trenches were deserted. All preparatory work for offensive operations had been abandoned. With their uniforms in ludicrous disorder, thousands of troops were devoting their time to interminable meetings. Most of the officers seemed completely confused. The local Galician population was looking on in surprise and amusement.

But beneath this discouraging picture of destruction there was already being kindled a new will to action. Like General Brusiloff, the officers who had retained their self-possession and ignored the countless

THE CATASTROPHE

blows to their self-respect, continued to toil with immeasurable enthusiasm and self-sacrifice for the creation of new spiritual and human contacts between the commanders and the troops. From morning till night many commanders strove to gain the ear of their soldiers, in an effort to convince them of the necessity of fighting for the preservation of the country and its newly won liberty. The commissars of the War Ministry and the local army committees were working feverishly in the same direction. In general, the Galician army, while not capable of active operations, was rapidly developing the will to action.

I remember the army conference at Kamenetz-Podolsk, General Brusiloff's headquarters. The huge hall was filled with hundreds of soldier delegates, sent from the most remote corners of the front. I beheld weary faces, feverish eyes, extraordinary tension. It was quite clear that before me were people who had experienced a great shock and, having lost the capacity to reason normally, were seeking for some sort of new justification of their continued sojourn in the trenches. In listening to the speeches of the delegates and the representatives of the army committees, of Brusiloff himself, and of the Bolsheviki who were led by the subsequently notorious Krilenko, I felt as if I were putting my hand to the very heart of the army. What the army was experiencing at that time, in the very deepest recesses of its consciousness, was a great, irresistible temptation, too great for human powers to endure.

After three years of the cruelest suffering, the millions of soldiers, exhausted to the last degree by the tortures of war, found themselves confronted suddenly with the questions: "What are we dying for? Must we die?"

FIRST VISITS TO THE ARMY

To put these questions to a man who must be ready and willing to die at any moment, to put before him anew, and in the midst of war, the question of the meaning of his sacrifice implied the paralysis of his will to action. Man can endure war and remain in the trenches under artillery fire only when he does not reason, when he does not think of the aims or, to be more correct, when he is animated by an unshakable, almost automatic conviction of the inevitability and necessity of sacrifice, for the sake of an already clear and established purpose, no longer subject to discussion. It is too late to think of war aims and to build up an "ideology of war" when you are already being called upon to stop the enemy's bullets.

No army can withstand such a temptation without grievous consequences. Everything else which was destroying the army—persecution of the officers, mutinies, the Bolshevization of various units, the interminable meetings, etc., was only the painful expression of that terrible struggle for life which gripped the soul of every soldier. He suddenly perceived an opportunity to justify morally his human weakness, his well-nigh unconquerable, instinctive desire to run away from those disgusting, horrible trenches. For the army to fight again meant to conquer anew the animal in man, to find anew some sort of unquestionable slogan of war that would make it possible again for everybody to look death in the face calmly and unflinchingly.

For the sake of the nation's life it was necessary to restore the army's will to die.

"Forward to the battle for freedom! I summon you not to a feast but to death!"

These were the words I used before the conference at Kamenetz-Podolsk. These words were also the

THE CATASTROPHE

keynote of all my addresses before the troops in the front line positions.

"We call you to social revolution! We summon you not to die for others but to destroy others, to destroy your class enemies in the rear!"

This counter slogan of Lenin carried with it terrible force, for it justified beforehand the animal fear of death which lurks in the heart of even the bravest. It supplied the mind with arguments in support of everything that was dark, cowardly and selfish in the army.

There is nothing remarkable in the fact that in the end, after months of bitter struggle, the most ignorant of the masses preferred murder and rapine and followed the leaders of the Bolshevik counter-revolution. The remarkable thing was the mighty wave of patriotic self-abnegation which swept the army at the front in the summer of 1917.

Incidentally, the German General Staff sensed at once the change on the Russian Front. Immediately upon my appointment as Minister of War, the transfer of German troops from the Eastern Front to the West was stopped. By the end of May the movement and concentration of the German forces was in the opposite direction.

Accompanied by several officers, General Brusiloff and I made an inspection of the army by automobile. Our problem was the examination of those forces which in about a month were to take the offensive. In two or three days we covered scores of positions.

The mode of inspection was always the same: We walked down the line, swinging around into the heart of the ranks to an improvised platform. On our mounting the platform, came the word of command and from all sides thousands of troops would rush towards us, surrounding the platform in a huge circle.

FIRST VISITS TO THE ARMY

The commanders spoke first, followed by committee delegates. Then I came, and then the discontented, hesitating mass of armed human beings in gray, confused in mind and weary in body and spirit, would become animated by a kind of new life. Their souls would become aglow with enthusiasm which at times reached the peaks of mad ecstasy. It was not always easy to escape from this raging sea of human beings to our automobile and speed away to the next inspection.

Of course, the new mood would not last long. But something of it remained. And wherever there were capable men among the commanders, commissars and army committees, strong centers of new discipline and a revived military psychology were created.

The majority of the troops were divided into two categories. On one side were men strong of will and eager for heroic action. From these were formed voluntary units calling themselves "Battalions of Death," "Detachments of Exemplary Sacrifice," etc. On the other side were whole units who were dominated by Bolshevik agitators. However, they gave us real trouble only when led by officers of the character of the notorious Dzevaltovsky, who managed, on one occasion, to bring under his unbridled influence the entire Grenadier Regiment of the Guards. Such dangerously infected units were to be found all along the front, and my commissars were compelled to wage real war against them, resorting even to artillery bombardment.

The officers at the front were divided into three groups. The majority were well-intentioned but confused and unable to lead; the minority were men who grasped the new situation and managed to find a way of approaching the heart and mind of the soldier; and,

THE CATASTROPHE

finally, there was a group hostile to the Revolution as a whole, gloating over its failures and sabotaging its successes. Among this group in particular were to be found, more frequently than anywhere else, men who, foreseeing future developments, quite cynically adjusted themselves to the new committee regulations, without regard to their calling as officers and their self-respect.

On the eve of my departure from the Galician Front for Odessa and Sebastopol, I was returning with General Brusiloff from a tour of inspection. We were in an open automobile, in a heavy downpour, drenched and weary. General Brusiloff was not a politician, but "by the grace of God" a leader of great courage and will-power. He was not given to much conversation, but he understood well the character of the soldier and sensed quickly every change in the spirit of the army. Under the unceasing beating of the rain, we discussed long and intimately that which at that time was stirring and torturing the army and all Russians.

Of course, like every strong man, Brusiloff was rather vain. I suppose that, to some extent, he was trying to impress me by playing up to my own views, as he described clearly and vividly the general situation at the front, his plans and the characteristics of the military commanders. But Brusiloff loved Russia too much to misrepresent fundamentals. And the fundamentals, as he saw them, coincided not only with my own sentiments, but with those of all who were struggling desperately to bring the Russian army back to life and action. It was not enough to talk, to analyze and engage in criticism (as General Alexeyeff, then commander-in-chief, was doing). It was necessary to create, to act and to take risks.

FIRST VISITS TO THE ARMY

Here, in the automobile, on the road from the front to Tarnopol, we definitely decided upon the offensive. I also made up my mind that with the beginning of the offensive General Brusiloff would no longer be on the Galician Front, but at General Headquarters at Mohileff. As commander-in-chief, I did not mention the matter to Brusiloff, as it was necessary first to obtain the consent of the Provisional Government to the removal of General Alexeyeff.

From the Southwestern Front I went to Odessa, and thence to Sebastopol, to adjust differences between the crews of the Black Sea Fleet and Admiral Kolchak, the commander.

THE BLACK SEA DRAMA

Admiral Kolchak was a brilliant sailor, the darling of the officers, and loved by his men. At the beginning of the Revolution he quickly oriented himself in the new environment and saved the Black Sea Fleet from the horrors experienced by the Baltic Fleet. Of course, in Sebastopol, as everywhere else, committees were formed. There was the Central Committee of the Black Sea Fleet, backed by a network of committees on the various vessels and among the commands on shore. But these committees consisted of both officers and men. Admiral Kolchak's own relations with the Central Committee were excellent.

The sentiments prevailing in the Black Sea Fleet can be gleaned from the fact that as late as at the end of May, when I came to Sebastopol, there were many, not only among the officers but also among the men, who were eager for a landing operation on the Bosphorus. The commands of the Black Sea Fleet remained an

THE CATASTROPHE

impregnable fortress against the propaganda of German and Bolshevist agents. It was from the shores of the Black Sea that the first calls to duty and discipline were sent to the army. And from the Black Sea Fleet came whole delegations to the front for propaganda of defense and in support of the offensive. In view of this attitude of the respective commands, any disagreement between Kolchak and the committees seemed impossible. Nevertheless, quite unexpectedly, a conflict developed.

I cannot recall now the issue in question. I believe it concerned some interference, on the part of the Central Committee, in the admiral's administrative duties. Moreover, the exact issue is not important. The important thing was the actual cause. Accustomed to general admiration and to absolute authority, the admiral could not reconcile himself to the realization that now he had a competitor—the Central Committee. The disagreement was not so much political as psychological.

With all his great energy, Admiral Kolchak was somewhat effeminate, capricious and slightly hysterical. En route in a destroyer from Odessa to Sebastopol, closeted in a small cabin, we had a long conversation. All the reasons he brought forth in support of his opinion that there was nothing for him to do but to resign did not bear criticism. All his complaints were trifles compared with the difficulties being experienced by the commanders at the front and in the Baltic Fleet. One by one I combated his conclusions. And only at the very end of the conversation did he give vent to a cry that came from the depths of a broken heart:

"To them [*i.e.*, to the sailors] the Central Committee means more than I do, and I no longer wish to have

FIRST VISITS TO THE ARMY

anything to do with them. I do not love them any more."

The stern eyes of the admiral filled with tears.

On my arrival at Sebastopol I became convinced that the leaders of the Central Committee, officers and men alike, were far removed from any thought of Kolchak's departure. "He must only realize," the committee members told me, "that for the present we are absolutely necessary to him and that it is quite impossible to dissolve the committee. Such action would mean the beginning of disorganization of the commands, an unexpected victory for the Bolsheviks."

This time my mission was successful. Admiral Kolchak made peace with the Central Committee and it seemed that everything remained as it was. But it only seemed so. A breach remained, and in exactly one month it widened into a gulf which forever parted Admiral Kolchak from his beloved fleet. A crisis began to develop in the soul of the brilliant sailor from which he emerged on land as the downright reactionary "dictator" of Siberia.

I have described this Kolchak episode in detail, in order to make it clear how even the best of the commanders were unable to reconcile themselves to the unavoidable difficulties of the transitional revolutionary period. Speaking in general, we may say that if the enlightened, cultured upper elements of Russia had shown greater patience at the beginning of the Revolution, the Bolsheviks would have perhaps found it more difficult to destroy Russia. After all the experiences of the Bolshevik terror for the past ten years, the "excesses" of the Revolution, which provoked such a storm of anger and resentment among many political and military leaders of Russia in the summer of 1917, appear now as mere trifles.

THE CATASTROPHE

ON THE NORTHERN FRONT

From Sebastopol I went to Kiev, where a sharp collision with the Ukrainian separatists was brewing. From Kiev I proceeded to General Headquarters at Mohileff, where my conversations with General Alexeyeff convinced me finally of the necessity of a change in the post of commander-in-chief. From Mohileff I returned to Petrograd for one day, where I put through Brusiloff's appointment, and departed immediately for the Northern Front.

Here, in the region of the eleventh army, occupying a position in the direction of Mitau, occurred an incident which illustrates vividly the subconscious processes at the front.

The commander of the eleventh army was the Bulgarian, General Radko-Dmitrieff, hero of the Balkan War of 1912-13, who had joined the Russian service. He was a grizzled warrior, who loved the soldier and knew how to handle him. Nevertheless, after the Revolution, he felt the sudden rise of a wall between himself and his troops. And frequently, to his surprise, his jocular words of encouragement to the soldiers provoked only irritation instead of the previous merriment and laughter.

"Right in this neighborhood, not very far from here," said the general to me as we were returning from the front line trenches, "in a certain regiment, there is an agitator. We cannot handle him. He is demoralizing the whole regiment with his discussions about the land. Won't you please tackle him?"

We entered a dugout unobservable from the enemy positions and called a number of troops from the trenches.

Wearry, growling faces surrounded us in a ring. We

FIRST VISITS TO THE ARMY

began to converse. Standing aloof, the little soldier who had won the ear of the regiment, made no effort to reply. His comrades thereupon pushed him forward. Voices:

"Well, what's the matter? Here is your chance to speak in the presence of the minister himself."

Finally the little soldier spoke up:

"What I want to say is this: You say we must fight, so that the peasants may have the land, but of what use is the land to me, for instance, if I am killed?"

I realized immediately that all discussion and logic were of no use in this case. What confronted me here was the dark inside of a human being. The case was one in which personal interest, in its most naked form, was being preferred to sacrifice for the common good. The desirability and wisdom of such sacrifice does not lend itself to proof by word or reason. It can only be felt. The situation was rather difficult. To leave the little soldier without a reply was unthinkable. Where the logic of reason seemed powerless it was necessary to resort to the logic of emotion.

Silently I took a few steps forward in the direction of the little soldier. Turning to Radko-Dmitrieff I said:

"General, I order you to remove this soldier immediately. Pack him off at once to his village. Let his fellow villagers know that the Russian Revolution has no need of cowards."

My surprising reply created a moving impression on all those present. The little soldier himself stood trembling, dumb and pale. And then he fell into a deep faint. Soon after I received a request from his officers to countermand the order for his removal. A profound change had come upon him. He was now an example of service to others.

THE CATASTROPHE

From the eleventh army I proceeded to the region of the seventh army, where General Yurii Daniloſſ was in command, who for the first eighteen months of the War had been quartermaster general to the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholayevitch, then commander-in-chief.

This general had not only strategic talent but considerable political acumen. He was one of the first and few among the high commanders to grasp the new soldier psychology at the front and managed to coöperate in constructive manner with the sound and patriotic majority of its army committee.

At that time General Daniloſſ found the front committees of great value, for in the neighboring fifth army there had arisen, early in the summer, a considerably strong Bolshevik propaganda organization. Particularly active in the destructive work of this organization, by means of promoting fraternization and the sowing of hostility against officers, was a certain hitherto unknown regimental surgeon, Skliansky.

At a big meeting in Dvinsk, of representatives of all the committees of the fifth army, and in the presence of the commander and his staff, I was called upon to speak. It was expected by all, from the commander to the privates, that "comrade" Skliansky, who had been so actively engaged in haranguing the committee and soldiers, would take this opportunity of fighting a verbal duel with the Minister of War.

The meeting proceeded. First the commander spoke, then the leaders of the army committee, followed by delegates from the trenches. But Skliansky kept silent. He not only showed no desire to expose the "imperialist" and "reactionary" efforts of the Provisional Government but stubbornly sought to keep as

FIRST VISITS TO THE ARMY

far as possible from the center. The incident appeared very much like a repetition of my experience with the little soldier in the eleventh army.

And, sure enough, the incomprehensible and inexplicable silence of the doctor finally angered the soldiers, particularly those from the trenches, who had been most subjected to the temptations of Bolshevik demagoguery. I observed some kind of a movement around Skliansky.

Soon we noticed that a quiet but rather energetic exchange of remarks was in progress between him and his neighbors. Apparently the doctor was being called upon to do something which he refused to do.

At last it became clear what the scene was about. The soldiers were trying to force Skliansky to speak. Gradually they pushed him forward toward the commanders.

"Oh, no," we heard, "you will be kind enough to speak here. If what you've been telling us is the truth there is no need of fear. We'll hear now what you have to say."

"Comrade" Skliansky stood sheepishly confused amid peals of laughter. Finally, the hesitating leader of a world revolution from the fifth army was pushed on to the platform.

He was compelled to speak. What he said was the usual Bolshevik nonsense, but there was no emotion, no fire, no conviction in his words.

The end of the episode was very sad for "comrade" Skliansky and his lieutenants. His duel with the War Minister became known throughout the army, and in a light rather ridiculous so far as the Bolsheviks were concerned. Subsequently, the brave revolutionist Skliansky became assistant to the Commissar of War, Leon Trotsky.

THE CATASTROPHE

After my tour of the front and two inspiring days in Moscow I returned on June fourteenth to Petrograd. It was necessary to finish some important government business and to return by the end of June to the Galician Front, for the offensive.

CHAPTER IX

THE OFFENSIVE

ITS INEVITABILITY

WE no longer find to-day the unanimity of opinion concerning our offensive of July, 1917, that prevailed then both in Russia and among the Allies. Due apparently to a misconception, some even consider that offensive as the last blow that killed the Russian army. Others believe that the operation was determined not by the interests of Russia but was "dictated" to us by our Allies. A third group is inclined to see in it a particular manifestation of "light-headedness" and irresponsibility on the part of the government in having permitted itself to be carried away by love of rhetoric.

The last opinion deserves no reply. The fact is that the resumption of active operations by the Russian army after two months of paralysis was dictated absolutely by the inner development of events in Russia. To be sure, the representatives of the Allies insisted on the execution by Russia, at least in part, of the strategic plan adopted at the Inter-Allied conference in Petrograd, in February, 1917. But the insistence of the Allies would have been of no avail if the necessity for the offensive had not been dictated by our own political considerations. The insistence of the Allies (France and England) played no part, if only because they no longer considered themselves bound by any obligations to Russia after the Revolution. As I have

THE CATASTROPHE

already said, the German General Staff having stopped, according to plan, all active operations on the Russian Front, there ensued a condition of virtual armistice. It was the plan of the German High Command that this armistice be followed by a separate peace and the exit of Russia from the War. Berlin's efforts to come to a direct agreement with Russia were begun as early as April. Of course, these efforts failed to make any impression on the Provisional Government and the whole Russian democracy, which were determined on peace as quickly as possible, but a general, not a separate peace. Von Bethmann-Hollweg, or, rather, Ludendorff, did not, however, lose hope of achieving Germany's purpose. They directed their attention upon the Soviet circles.

About the middle of June there appeared in Petrograd, among other foreign socialists who were paying frequent visits to Russia, one of the leaders of the Swiss Social-Democratic party. His name was Grimm. Despite his definite anti-Allied attitude, the Provisional Government permitted him to enter Russia on guarantees given by certain leaders of the Soviet who maintained a strong attitude in favor of continuing Russia's defense. However, on his arrival in Petrograd, Grimm immediately launched a propaganda along pro-German lines. Soon after we intercepted a letter addressed to Grimm by Hoffman, of the Swiss Federal Council, which, by way of instruction to Grimm, declared:

"Germany will undertake no offensive on the Eastern Front as long as there remains a possibility of agreement with Russia."

Thus it was not possible to rely upon a new blow from Germany that would definitely bring the Russian democracy, dreaming of peace, to the realization of

THE OFFENSIVE

the bitter facts of the situation. It was necessary to make a choice—to accept the consequences of the virtual demobilization of the Russian army and capitulate to Germany, or to assume the initiative in military operations. Having rejected the idea of a separate peace, which is always a misfortune for the country concluding it, the return to new action became unavoidable. For no army can remain in indefinite idleness. An army may not always be in a position to fight, but the expectancy, at all times, of impending action constitutes the fundamental condition of its existence. To say to an army in the midst of war that under no circumstances would it be compelled to fight is tantamount to transforming the troops into a meaningless mob, useless, restless, irritable and, therefore, capable of all sorts of excesses. For this reason and to preserve the interior of the country from the grave wave of anarchy threatening from the front it was incumbent upon us, before embarking upon the main problem of army reorganization and systematic reduction and readjustment of its regular formations, to make of it once more an army, *i.e.*, to bring it back to the psychology of action, or of impending action.

The Russian army was, of course, no longer capable of carrying out in any measure the plan of a general offensive worked out in January. If during the three years preceding the Revolution the Russian troops failed to win a single decisive victory over the German armies (only on the Austro-Galician and the Caucasus fronts were there any victories), it was quite futile to think of victory now, in the summer of 1917.

But a victory was not necessary! As President Wilson declared categorically before Congress, it was the Russian Revolution which made it possible for America to enter the War and thus alter fundamentally the

THE CATASTROPHE

ratio of the contending forces in the War. As late as January, 1917, the war situation made it imperative for Russia and her Allies to bend all their energies to bring the War to an end by the autumn of 1917. But in the summer of 1917 it became necessary only to keep going until the arrival of the American army on the Western Front, with all its tremendous resources. This general Allied task expressed itself, so far as Russia was concerned, in a new strategic aim: we were no longer required to engage in a general offensive, but to compel the Germans to keep as many divisions as possible on the Russian Front until the conclusion of the campaign of 1917, *i.e.*, until the autumn. As I will show later, this task was carried out in full by the Russian Revolution, and all the contentions of English and French politicians to the effect that not only the Bolsheviks but also the Provisional Government and Russia in general failed to carry out Russia's obligations to the Allied Governments, and thus delivered a blow to the Allied cause, are either a grave mistake or a conscious falsification of the facts, in contradiction with all conceptions of honesty and honor in international relations.

In general, the Allies throughout the existence of the Provisional Government—towards which they maintained a critical attitude—failed to understand that the material weakening of Russia, after the fall of the monarchy, was compensated in full measure by the effect of the Russian Revolution on the internal situation in Germany, Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey.

The most important effect of the Russian Revolution, in my opinion, was the fundamental change in the attitude and sentiment of Austria's Slav population, as well as the sharp change in the orientation of Pil-

THE OFFENSIVE

sudsky's Polish legions, which up until the moment of the Russian Revolution were fighting in the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian army against Russia and her Allies.

In Austria-Hungary the centrifugal movement in the Slav regions was acutely accentuated. On the front itself the Austro-German command was forced to transfer many Slav troops to the Italian and French fronts, substituting these on the Russian front with picked German divisions. In the ranks of the Russian army appeared the extremely well-trained Czechoslovak forces. The abandonment by the Provisional Government of the old Czarist claim to Constantinople created a very favorable impression among the ruling elements in Turkey. Shortly before summer successful negotiations with Turkey for her exit from the War had already become possible. The same was true of Bulgaria, whose troops on the Russian Front had become quite demoralized.

Finally, on the extreme north of the endless Russian Front, the politico-military situation was likewise altered to Germany's disadvantage. In Sweden the anti-German sentiment promoted by Branting and his group was given a powerful impetus, while in Finland the local activists, *i.e.*, the politico-military groups seeking to achieve Finland's independence by aiding Germany, abandoned their policy, at least temporarily. To be sure, all these military and political disadvantages were balanced in some measure by the German General Staff through the work of the Bolsheviki and the Ukrainian separatists. But the necessity forced upon Germany of returning German divisions and German artillery from the West to the Russian Front and increasing the number of German forces in the East made it impossible for Ludendorff, in the spring of

THE CATASTROPHE

1918, to deliver a decisive blow in the West, before the arrival of the American troops.

But leaving aside all these political and international considerations, the restoration of the fighting capacity of the Russian army by the resumption of active operations was, in the spring of 1917, demanded by Russia's national consciousness. I could cite an endless list of decisions, resolutions, demands and orders for the resumption of the offensive. At the very beginning of the Revolution General Brusiloff telegraphed to the Provisional Government concerning the absolute need of an offensive. At the same time, Field Marshal Haig, in an order to the British army, announced receipt of a telegram from General Alexeyeff informing him that the Russian troops were preparing for an offensive.

The need of an offensive to "wipe out the shame" was constantly emphasized in its resolutions by the Temporary Committee of the Duma. The first conference of the Cadet party (Miliukoff's party) spoke likewise. The official organ of this party and the liberal press in general waged a campaign for an offensive, at times with even too much energy. The first conference of officers, meeting at General Headquarters in the middle of May, after presenting, in a resolution, a most critical picture of conditions in the army at the end of the Gutchkoff-Alexeyeff administration, insisted categorically on the need of resumption of action at the front. I may mention in passing that the officers' conference at General Headquarters laid the foundation for the Officers' Union in the army, a distinctly political body around whose executive committee was born the future military conspiracy headed by Korniloff.

Simultaneously with the conference at General

THE OFFENSIVE

Headquarters, the conference of democratic officers was in progress in Petrograd, which likewise demanded restoration of the fighting capacity of the Russian army. Delegations of front and army committees which came to Petrograd for "contact" with the government and the Soviet, after the German blow on the Stokhod, also insisted categorically on the resumption of the offensive by the army. The first congress of front delegates, in session at the time of Gutchkoff's resignation, gave expression to the same demand in the name of all the troops in the front lines. In the middle of April, the Petrograd Soviet, followed soon thereafter by the Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets, took the same stand, although with certain reservations and ambiguities.

In short, there was not in the whole of Russia a single political group and social organization (with the sole exception of the Bolsheviki) which did not realize that the restoration of the fighting capacity of the Russian army and its assumption of the offensive was the immediate fundamental, imperative national task of Free Russia. For the sake of her future Russia had to perform this act of heroic sacrifice. And this act was performed, thanks to the popular enthusiasm, the will to sacrifice and the truly revolutionary enthusiasm which gripped the country.

THE SOVIETS, THE BOLSHEVIKI AND THE OFFENSIVE

A month after the departure of Gutchkoff from the War Ministry and of Alexeyeff from General Headquarters, a profound change had taken place at the front and a considerable change in the country. "The War Ministry," wrote the semi-Bolshevist *Novaya Zhsun*, on May seventeenth, "is working with extraor-

THE CATASTROPHE

dinary energy, in coöperation with all the bourgeois and the majority of the democratic forces, for the restoration of the discipline and the fighting capacity of the army, and there is no longer any doubt of its aim: unification of the Allied front and an offensive against the enemy."

Neither was there any doubt in Berlin concerning the successful work of the Provisional Government. The transfer of German divisions to our front was greatly stimulated. The propaganda activity of the august commander-in-chief on the German Eastern Front, Prince Rupprecht, was likewise extended and intensified. The Bolshevist press, as well as the special sheets printed behind the enemy lines for distribution in the Russian trenches, developed a campaign of monstrous slander and misrepresentation against me and General Brusiloff.

On June fifteenth, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened in Petrograd. I will cite only one episode to show the sentiments of the delegates, particularly of the soldiers from the front. Some Bolshevik, in an effort to fan demagogic and anarchist instincts, began quoting from two "reactionary" orders of the Provisional Government, which had just been promulgated. In a fury of resentment he cited the particularly emphatic passages from a circular issued by Premier Lvoff calling upon all responsible elements throughout the country to combat the Bolshevik campaign of anarchy. To the astonishment and wrath of all the Bolsheviks in the hall, the Congress greeted every word of the circular with a storm of applause. Thereupon the Bolshevist orator took up my "Order No. 17," just published, dealing with measures for stopping desertion. At this point the Congress could

THE OFFENSIVE

no longer restrain itself. The assembly rose as one man in a stormy ovation.

In the face of the definite patriotic attitude of the first Congress of Soviets it was quite easy for me to put through my resolution approving the operations which were to begin at the front two weeks later. The resumption of the offensive was approved by the Congress, the Bolsheviki alone voting in the negative. This order was supplementary to the very severe anti-desertion law of the Provisional Government, adopted several days before. Having attained tremendous proportions in the last months of the Czarist régime and assumed the nature of an epidemic in the first two months of the Revolution, desertions in the army ceased by the beginning of military operations in the summer. According to official figures, the number of desertions in various parts of the front had been reduced by that time to between 200,000 and 500,000 men.

Incidentally it was at this Congress that I met Lenin for the first and only time. He was accompanied by his entire staff. Present were Kameneff, Zinovieff, Lunacharsky, as well as Trotsky, who, while still hesitating about joining the Bolsheviki, was already quite openly flirting with them. Sensing the violent opposition of the Congress, Lenin did not, however, restrain himself from offering a very simple method of solving the complex social problems. He suggested the "arrest of one hundred of the biggest capitalists." All the rest would then care for itself! This ingenious proposal, which evoked the enthusiasm of the street mobs assembled daily before the balcony of the Ksheshinskaya Palace, occupied by Lenin and his staff, brought only laughter and ridicule at the Congress. But those assembled here were the few,

THE CATASTROPHE

the best, the picked elements of the people and of the army, whereas there, outside the doors of the Congress, remained the dark, infuriated thousands of *déclassé* elements, performing under conditions of war and revolution the rôle of the "class-conscious proletariat" in the shops and factories. On taking the floor to reply to Lenin, I was struck not so much by the effect produced by him on the delegates as by the realization of the destructive influence he wielded over audiences of another character.

I do not know what Lenin felt while listening to me. I do not even know whether he did listen to me or whether his ear was attuned principally to the sentiments of the audience. But he did not remain to the end of my address. Picking up his brief case, with head bent, he stole out of the hall sidewise, almost unnoticed. However, Lenin and his close lieutenants had more important business before them than the Congress of Soviets. Over the heads of the leaders of the democracy, who had "sold themselves to the bourgeoisie," they decided to appeal directly to the Petrograd proletariat, having planned to bring pressure to bear on the Congress by preparing another armed demonstration. The date set for the demonstration, if I recall aright, was June twenty-fourth. According to Lenin's plan, this demonstration, if successful, was to have been transformed into an armed uprising. The slogans of the movement were "Bread, Peace, Liberty"; "Away with the Capitalists"; "Revision of the Rights of Soldiers" and "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers." The tenth among these "enemies of the proletariat" and of the toiling masses was Kerensky. The remaining five ministers, all socialists, were for the present accorded mercy by Lenin.

The brazen effort to provoke new street riots was

THE OFFENSIVE

frustrated by the energetic action of the Soviet leaders. But the activities of the Bolsheviki in seeking to force disturbances in Petrograd at exactly the moment when the interests of the German General Staff at the front demanded it, gave rise to an interesting coincidence.

The Bolsheviki failed, however, in thwarting the offensive. But next month, on July sixteenth, the new operation undertaken by the Bolsheviki in Petrograd, in support of the German Staff, proved more successful.

WITH THE ARMY BEFORE THE OFFENSIVE

After carrying through the necessary resolution at the Congress of the Soviets, after visiting the Cossack Congress and receiving from the regimental committees of the Petrograd garrison the solemn promise that they would not take advantage of my absence to deal a treacherous blow to the Revolution, I left, on June twenty-sixth, for that part of the front where the offensive was to begin. In Tarnopol the military representatives of all the Allied staffs entered my car. In the name of the King of England, the British representative accredited to the Russian General Headquarters promised that the British armies would support our offensive. For reasons still unknown to me this promise was not kept. In Tarnopol I made public my order to the troops for the advance. The whole of Russia was tense with expectation. Would the troops advance? No one ventured to answer the question.

Beyond Tarnopol began the real, active front. How different was the situation now, as compared with that at the end of May, on my first visit to General Brusiloff! Then there was deadly silence and emptiness.

THE CATASTROPHE

Now there was life, movement, action preparatory for the great effort. The regiments were marching, ammunition boxes bumping, field kitchens thundering by toward the front lines. Artillery was roaring in the distance. At night, here and there over our positions, were to be seen the burning rockets of the Germans.

Slowly, with a kind of triumphant air, my train pulled up to the headquarters of General Hutor, commander of the Galician Front, near the small, out-of-the-way town of Kshivy, a short distance from the positions of the seventh army, which was to have moved first in the direction of the Brzezany.

Hutor, who succeeded Brusiloff as front commander, was not a particularly remarkable general. But he had a first-class chief-of-staff in General Dukhonin, one of the very best of Russia's officers, who had a brilliant career during the War and knew how to retain the respect of his soldiers in the very heat of the Revolution, without sacrificing in any way the honor of his uniform or the dignity of an honest citizen. Soon after the Bolshevik coup d'état, Dukhonin, at that time already chief of the General Staff, was lynched at the Mohileff station at General Headquarters, on the incitement of Krilenko.

On June twenty-sixth began the artillery preparation for the drive. For two days our artillery poured its fire on the enemy trenches. The reply of the watchful enemy was silence. The front line of their trenches had been cleared by the Germans. Their well camouflaged artillery was awaiting its hour. To be sure, not everything was quite in order in the spirit of the seventh and eleventh armies, which had been designated for the offensive. There were divisions in a state bordering on mutiny. There were regiments

THE OFFENSIVE

showing only perfunctory obedience. There were officers quite without "heart" and some who were frankly sabotaging the preparatory operations.

On June thirtieth, I inspected the positions. It is difficult now to describe our state of mind. High tension, determination and, at times, a feeling of impending triumph! A great deal of thought and feeling had been experienced by the army. Both officers and men were now going into battle not with the old emotions. We felt clearly their effort to overcome something in themselves, to free themselves from sensations unusual on the eve of battle. There was more depth, more spirituality, but less of concentrated harmony. The troops seemed to feel that the dent in their insides had not quite been removed. To the very last moment the officers did not know whether the soldiers would follow them in the attack. The soldiers were not quite sure whether it was necessary to die when there, in the rear, the fond dreams of generations were being realized.

On that day, in our final address to the troops before the battle, every one of us who spoke was particularly stirred. For were not our speeches the last greeting before death? The soldiers and many of the officers drank in every word, seeking to find in them the answer to the painful question which stirred their simple souls to the very last moment.

I remember a throng of soldiers in the region of the eleventh army, near a dugout, who attracted the attention of the German artillery. We had to talk under the music of the flying shells. But no one moved, no one ventured to seek shelter, no one even bent his head.

Again, I recall a trip late at night. Rain and storm. At one spot regiments which had just come up from the

THE CATASTROPHE

rear were awaiting us. Under the terrific downpour, to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning, drenched through and through, the thousands did not move, anxious to find, in my words, faith in the justice of their coming sacrifice of death.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE

AT last, July first! The general air is that of Passion Week: solemn, prayerful, sorrowful. We move towards the observation point, situated on a hill of a chain of elevations running along the line of our positions. The heavy artillery roars incessantly. Over our heads the monstrous shells scream pitifully on their way to the enemy trenches.

Our artillerists are confused: many of the guns sent us by the Allies have failed to withstand two days' work. Apparently our Allies have acted according to the old Russian saying: "Take, oh, God, what is of no use to us."

We are now at the observation point. From here we see the field of battle as clearly as if it were on the palm of our hand. But for the present all is emptiness.

There is no one to be seen.

The artillery roars on.

With growing impatience we look at our watches.

Finally, sudden, complete silence. A suggestion of fear!

Are the troops attacking?

The troops are attacking!

There, before the first enemy line, are some barely visible, running dots. They increase! The battle is developing furiously. Almost in the very center appear our English armored cars. The German artillery begins to pound them. Ours is now silent.

THE CATASTROPHE

Especially difficult is the situation on the left flank of the enemy. There, our troops must capture a slope, dubbed, for its shape, the "flatiron."

Through our field glasses we see clearly how the little black figures of our men slip down over it and how at a certain spot the German artillery begins to strike them. A thud. Dense smoke and débris. In place of the little figures—a shell hole. From below, the figures climb again. But why is our artillery silent? Above our heads enemy shells begin to whistle gently. We must stop our hurried breakfast in the shade of some old oak trees and move into the dugout of the observation point, proceeding further along a line of connecting trenches and not, any longer, along the direct line of the wood.

On the first day of the battle we captured 10,000 prisoners and several cannon, but failed to break through the line towards Brzezany. Indecisive also were the battles on our right flank, where the eleventh army was in action. Guns, prisoners, but not a step forward!

There where last year Brusiloff attacked the Austrian Slavs were now only German and Hungarian divisions, with an admixture of Turks.

But on the left flank, where the eighth army was in action, our troops in a few days achieved a brilliant success. After breaking through the Austrian Front at Kalusch, the troops of General Korniloff and General Tcheremisoff broke through deep into the enemy lines, capturing, on July tenth, the old city of Galitch.

The success at Kalusch was facilitated by the fact that on this part of the front there were many Slavs in the enemy's ranks. In addition, our command had succeeded in obtaining, a few days before the battle, all the necessary information concerning the disposition

THE BATTLE

of the enemy troops and the plans of the enemy's command.

The offensive of the Russian troops occurred exactly four months after the outbreak of the Revolution, midway between March and November.

The operations begun by us in Galicia were later extended to the Western Front commanded by General Deniken and to the Northern Front. Very soon they lost their offensive character and became purely defensive actions. The failures of the Russian armies thereupon became one of the sharpest and most poisonous weapons in the struggle against the Provisional Government conducted by the leaders of the Korniloff military conspiracy, which matured in September. But this utilization for political purposes of the restoration of the fighting capacity of the Russian army cannot, looked at objectively, belittle its historical significance.

At the very height of the venomous campaign waged against the Provisional Government under the camouflage of diplomatic flirtation by the official ruling circles of England and France, the staff of our commander-in-chief forwarded to the Allied staffs, under date of October second or third, the following report, which, by the way, was suppressed by the Allied authorities:

"More than six and a half months have passed since the beginning of our Revolution, but our armies continue to hold, as before, the forces of the enemy. Moreover, these forces have not decreased during that period, but on the contrary have increased in number. On the day of the resumption of the offensive by our troops in Galicia, July first, the number of enemy divisions on the Russo-German Front was equal to that on March twelfth [*i.e.*, the last day of the monarchy—A.K.]. And at the height of the battles in Eastern

THE CATASTROPHE

Galicia and Bukowina the forces of the enemy increased by nine and a half infantry divisions. This increase consisted entirely of Germans, while the number of Austrians and Turks was reduced. The enemy's artillery had been increased during that period by 640 guns of various calibers. The Caucasus front is not taken into consideration in this report."

Thus, after the first moments of military weakening, Russia after the Revolution continued to hold the enemy on her front, in numbers at least equal to the pre-revolutionary period. Thanks to the psychological influence exerted by the Russian Revolution on the populations of the Central Empires, to which I have already referred, Ludendorff was compelled to concentrate purely German divisions on the Russian Front in numbers yet unprecedented during the entire period of the War.

The strategic task on the Russian Front in the year 1917 was carried out in full: the liquidation of the War through German victory, pending the entrance of the United States into active operations, became impossible.

This fundamental consequence of the restoration of the fighting capacity of the Russian army did not in any way depend on the measure of success of the Russian operations, in the narrow, technical sense of the word. For this reason, with the moment of the revival of the army's activity, the front ceased to be the point of concentration in the internal policy of the government.

Our attention was now transferred to the interior of the country, where, by utilizing the psychological effect of the army's resurrection, it was necessary to stimulate with all the power available the convalescence of a national consciousness and the strengthening of the new state born of the Revolution.

THE BATTLE

CONSOLIDATION OF THE STATE

With the beginning of the summer, the Provisional Government, through the ministers of the Left, began building a strong dam against the anarcho-Bolshevist stream.

As I have already said, the Provisional Government was quite alone during the first two months of the Revolution in its struggle for the restoration of governmental authority, for the proponents of a "strong government" in the Duma had no influence whatever on the masses. They merely sought to supply wise guidance, while the leaders of the Soviet, playing the rôle of a loyal opposition, succeeded only in undermining the authority of the government.

But now, with the participation of these leaders in the government, the struggle for the establishment of real authority, for the restoration of national political discipline was launched within the Soviets, within the ranks of the revolutionary democracy themselves. Having assumed ministerial portfolios the opponents of yesterday, who had carried no responsibility in their opposition, found themselves under the blows of the most irresponsible demagoguery on the Left.

From the point of view of anarchy and the negation of all normal processes of government, all the parties of the Left represented in the Provisional Government were taking a clearly "counter-revolutionary" position. To expose the "reactionary" or counter-revolutionary crimes of the Soviet ministers, to accuse them of "conspiracy with the capitalists" against the proletariat and of "treason to the Revolution" became now the chief task of the Bolsheviks in their propaganda and press. Lenin felt clearly that the chief obstacles in the strug-

THE CATASTROPHE

gle of the Bolsheviki for power were not the liberal parties, which had lost all foundation of influence, but the socialist and democratic parties, particularly the socialist parties, which controlled almost all the political power but which accepted the War as a tragic but unavoidable struggle.

LENIN

Did Lenin believe sincerely that the leaders of the Russian democracy, with many of whom he had worked shoulder to shoulder for many years against Czarism, were really "betraying" the people, their own past and all the traditions of the Russian liberation movement in general?

Of course, not!

In his very first speech before the Petrograd Soviet, on the evening of April seventeenth, immediately after his arrival from Switzerland, Lenin, in summoning the soldiers to fraternization and the workers to seizure of the factories, admitted that with the fall of the monarchy Russia had become "the freest" country in the world and that no one in Russia would dare to threaten the interests of the Russian working classes.* More than that: already at that moment Lenin understood very well that no socialist experiments were possible in Russia, an agricultural country, with a weak industry almost entirely ruined by the War. The leaders of the Russian Revolution were aiming to consolidate and to strengthen political democracy on the basis of comprehensive social reforms. This task could not be opposed by Lenin in so far as the question

* At the beginning of November, on the very eve of the Bolshevik coup d'état, Lenin repeated in the *Pravda* his statement of April seventeenth.

THE BATTLE

at issue concerned Russia alone, because up to the War he had been himself a supporter of democracy.

But the fate of Russia was the least consideration of Lenin and his friends in 1917. With the stubborn blindness of a sick fanatic, viewing the World War through the narrow window of a remote corner of Switzerland, Lenin had as early as 1915 reached the utterly groundless conclusion that the European War would end in a social revolution in the industrial, capitalist countries of Western Europe considered ripe for socialism.

As Lenin saw it, the coming of this world social revolution was to be stimulated by the speediest possible transformation of the "exterior war of peoples" into an "internal war of classes." And in order to facilitate this transformation, said Lenin, it was incumbent upon all "true" revolutionists in all belligerent countries "to promote the defeat of their own fatherlands." As the first step in this task, Lenin argued, it was necessary to strive for the defeat of the "Czarist monarchy," the "most barbarous and most reactionary of all governments."

Thus, the promotion of the defeat of his own country, Russia, became for Lenin and his closest associates not shameful treason and disgusting crime but a kind of revolutionary duty, a policy dictated by his "socialist conscience." Russia must be smashed as the chief foundation of European reaction, and his backward, agricultural country, as Lenin himself described it, must become the base of operations of the "vanguard of the proletarian world revolution," pending the social revolution which was to develop at any moment in the industrial countries of the West.

On leaving Switzerland early in April, 1917, for Russia via Germany, in a train readily placed at his

THE CATASTROPHE

disposal by Ludendorff and Chancellor Von Bethmann-Hollweg, Lenin, in his parting declaration to his Swiss socialist friends, wrote that Russia was for him only the springboard for social revolution in Western Europe. Already then, in the spring of 1917, the half-mad fanatic saw clearly the German workers closing their ranks for the "final conflict" against capitalism. In November, 1917, Lenin and Zinovieff expected that within six months the Revolution would be under way in the West.

Such was the substance of the "revolutionary" program which matured in Lenin's brain. One must point out that nowhere in Europe, except in Russia, is it possible to find such a type of political leader, one so utterly devoid of any feeling of country. Under Czarism the people were accustomed to regard the state itself as hostile. The monopoly on all outer expressions of patriotism arrogated to itself by absolutism perverted in the people the very feeling of patriotism. To be sure, national consciousness did exist in Russia and consciously or unconsciously it permeated the entire being of the overwhelming majority of Russians. But the deadly oppression of the old régime, destroying the country not only materially but also spiritually, brought forth here and there a disease extremely dangerous to the very existence of the nation: the atrophy of the sense of nationhood, of the sense of patriotism.

Lenin was the most extreme expression of that spiritual ulcer of injured patriotism which for decades had been poisoning the national consciousness of the Russian intelligentsia. There is hardly a person among cultured Russians who has not, at one period or another of his life, suffered more or less acutely from this disease of spiritual or, rather, intellectual

THE BATTLE

estrangement from his country. In this sense alone are Lenin and his friends unquestionably the product of the Russian past, of Russian history.

THE BOLSHEVIKI AND THE GERMAN STAFF

Lenin's treason to Russia, committed in the very heat of the War, is an historically unquestionable and undeniable fact.

Of course, Lenin was no common agent of Germany, in the ordinary sense of the word. He did not regard the bourgeois motherland as his own and felt himself bound by no obligations toward it. The general defeatist theory invented by him and his desire for the defeat of the Czarist monarchy in particular prepared him psychologically for the practical realization of his theory by the resort to methods which, in the common language of bourgeois politics, are considered betrayal and treason.

One must admit that the very monstrosity of Lenin's crime rendered it so improbable to the consciousness of the average human being that to this very day many people cannot accept it as true. Yet it is a fact, confirmed by the frank admissions of Hindenburg, Ludendorff and General Hoffman, chief of German operations on the Russian Front, and by the exposé of Edward Bernstein, noted leader of the German Social-Democratic party. I will not cite here all the data from the writings of the three aforementioned German generals. It is sufficient to quote the following few words from Ludendorff's memoirs:

"In sending Lenin to Russia our government took upon itself a very great responsibility. This journey was justified from the military point of view: it was necessary that Russia should collapse."

THE CATASTROPHE

So far as I was concerned, it was not necessary for me to await the German admissions, made later, after the War. The Provisional Government, in the summer of 1917, had established clearly the betrayal of Russia by Lenin and his lieutenants. The situation was as follows:

Like all belligerent countries, with the exception of Russia, which was quite backward in her methods of promoting the dissolution of the enemy's morale, Germany, even before the Revolution, recruited spies among her Russian prisoners, transporting them to the Russian frontiers, where they appeared in the rôle of war "heroes" who had "fled" from their captivity. The number of such spies greatly increased in the first weeks of the Revolution, for during that period the Finnish frontier was left virtually unguarded, the entire Russian machinery of military intelligence being destroyed. One of these volunteer spies came directly to me. He explained that he had accepted the espionage offer with the idea of discovering the ways and means whereby the traitors who had come to Russia were communicating with their German chiefs. He outlined to me the entire technique of this communication. The man's revelations were of no particular value, however, and offered no opportunity for the study and exposure of the German espionage apparatus at work in Russia.

But information obtained from another informant produced facts of very great value and established conclusively the relations of the Bolsheviki with the German staff and the ways and means employed in maintaining the contact.

In April there came to General Alexeyeff at General Headquarters a Ukrainian officer named Yermolenko, who had "fled" from a war prisoner's camp in

THE BATTLE

Germany, after having fictitiously accepted the rôle of a German agent. The task meted out to him on his return to Russia consisted in propaganda in the rear in behalf of Ukrainian separatism. He was supplied with full information concerning ways and means of communication with the German authorities, the banks through which the necessary funds were being transferred, and also with the names of several other important agents, among whom were a number of Ukrainian separatists and Lenin *

On my visit to General Headquarters in May, shortly after my appointment as Minister of War, General Alexeyeff and General Denikin, his chief-of-staff, presented to me a report and a special memorandum which contained the exact lines of communication connecting the Russian traitors with their highly placed German friends.

The Provisional Government was thereupon confronted with the difficult task of exploring the lines indicated by Yermolenko, shadowing the agents connecting Lenin with Ludendorff and seizing them in the act, with all possible incriminating material. The least possible publicity, of course, would have compelled the German staff to change the means of communication, while under the conditions of absolute freedom of press then prevailing in Russia, excluding virtually even the application of military censorship, Yermolenko's exposé would have become public property had the slightest information concerning the matter penetrated even into the most reserved and most

* Because of lack of space I have excluded from this book the story of the separatist movement in the Ukraine and the struggle of the Provisional Government against it, as well as the general question of national minorities and other basic problems of the Revolution, as they appeared in 1917—A. K.

THE CATASTROPHE

responsible political circles. Even within the Provisional Government it was necessary to confine the very grave information to a limited number of ministers and officials.

General Alexeyeff and I decided to confide the task of following up Yermolenko's information concerning the activities of the Ukrainian separatists to a special agency, under the direct supervision of General Headquarters, while the Provisional Government took upon itself the task of investigating the connection of Lenin with the German staff. Only two ministers, in addition to myself and Prince Lvoff, knew of this—Minister of Foreign Affairs Terestchenko and Minister of Communications Nekrassoff. Within this circle the execution of the task was placed upon Terestchenko, while the rest of us tried, as far as possible, not to interfere in the details of the work. The task was extremely difficult, complex and long, but the results were most deadly for Lenin. The means of Lenin's communication with Germany were clearly determined, as well as the identity of the persons (Fuerstenberg-Ganetsky in Sweden and Kozlowsky and Mme. Sumenson in Petrograd) through whom money transfers were made and the names of the banks in question (the Diskonto Gesellschaft in Berlin, the Nya Bank in Stockholm and the Siberian Bank in Petrograd).

On his arrest, during the Bolshevik uprising in July, Kozlowsky did not deny receiving large sums from abroad, when confronted with the incriminating documents. In defense this man, who at one time had enjoyed a decent reputation as a member of the Polish Socialist party, declared brazenly that together with Ganetsky and Mme. Sumenson he had been carrying on a contraband trade during the War, importing into Russia articles of women's apparel.

THE BATTLE

On July eighteenth or nineteenth, exactly at the time of the Bolshevik uprising, Ganetsky was to arrive in Petrograd, across Finland. The Bolshevik-German agent from Stockholm, with documents on his person constituting decisive evidence of Lenin's connection with the German staff, was to have been arrested by the Russian authorities on the Russo-Swedish border. The documents were fully known to us. How it happened that Ganetsky was not arrested and why the two months' work of the Provisional Government (in the main that of Terestchenko), in connection with the investigation of the Bolshevik activities, ended in failure will be told later. At this point, fully conscious of my responsibility before history, I can only repeat the words of the district attorney of Petrograd, in the report made public by him immediately after the July uprising and edited by me:

Whatever may have been the motives of Lenin and his closest associates, they formed within the Bolshevik Party in the spring of 1917 an organization which, in order to give aid to the nations at war with Russia in their belligerent acts against her, entered into an agreement with the agents of the aforementioned nations to promote disorganization of the Russian army and of the country, for which purpose, with the financial means obtained from these nations, it organized propaganda among the population and in the army.

THE BOLSHEVIST UPRISING

From this it will be seen that the struggle against the Bolsheviks was for the Provisional Government but a part of the military struggle against Germany. And,

THE CATASTROPHE

had Lenin not had the backing of the entire material and technical power of the German propaganda machine and espionage service, he never would have succeeded in destroying Russia.

In saying this I do not wish to place the responsibility for Russia's destruction on Germany. The recent European War not only introduced in all the belligerent countries the use of poison gases and the practice of all possible measures for the physical annihilation of the enemy, that war also introduced, on a scale never known before and as a regular means of warfare, the resort to the poison gases of propaganda and bribery for the moral disintegration of the enemy's rear. The data concerning this service already made public in England and Germany show, first, that everywhere the moral laws of man's social life were abolished in the promotion of the spiritual poisoning and disintegration of the enemy, and, second, that the German propaganda service differed in no wise from that of the Allies in this respect.

Both in Russia and abroad the Provisional Government is criticized because of the admission of Lenin into Russia after his journey across Germany and the failure to arrest him on the frontier. It should be remembered, however, that Lenin's agreement with Ludendorff was not contingent upon the route of his journey from Switzerland to Russia. At first Lenin sought permission to come to Russia through France and England. The permission to cross Germany was granted to him by Ludendorff during the War, before the Revolution. In this respect Lenin's journey across Germany was, indeed, the first warning to those who immediately perceived its implications. Moreover, how could we have kept Lenin out of Russia when at that time (April 15-16, 1917) the Russian customs

THE BATTLE

and frontier guard service had not yet been restored? At the meeting of the Provisional Government at which the question of the admittance of political emigrants coming through Germany was discussed, Premier Lvoff and War Minister Gutchkoff declared categorically that they did not have at hand the technical means of preventing their crossing of the frontier.

But even had the Provisional Government possessed these means it could not, in all probability, have used them, for the right of returning to Russia for all political emigrants, regardless of their political opinions, was at that time the clear and determined wish of the entire country.

Now, after many years, it is difficult to believe that even the *Rietch*, the chief newspaper of the Constitutional-Democratic party, welcomed the appearance of Lenin in Petrograd despite his journey across Germany. As the liberal-democratic mouthpiece expressed it, "Such a generally recognized socialist leader [*i.e.*, Lenin] must be in the arena of the struggle, and his arrival in Russia, regardless of what we may think of his views, must be welcomed."

So far as the Bolsheviki themselves were concerned, they could no longer halt their advance along the path of destruction even had the air of Russia awakened in Lenin, Zinovieff and the others some feeling of honor and conscience. Every one of their steps was controlled by Ludendorff's representatives and the unlimited material means for their propaganda of "social revolution" would have been taken away from the Bolsheviki by the German staff at the first inclination on the part of the Central Committee of their party to abandon its defeatist program. Thus, speaking quite objectively, there could be no peace or agreement between the Bolsheviki and the forces of the Russian

THE CATASTROPHE

democracy. Open war between them was inevitable, as was the struggle between Russia and Germany at the front. And, indeed, the assumption of the offensive by the Russian troops against Germany was accompanied by the offensive of the Bolshevist staff against revolutionary Russia in the rear of the Russian army.

On July fifteenth, on my brief return to Petrograd from the front, to attend to some urgent business, it was already evident that very serious and decisive developments were impending. During the two months of my uninterrupted travels over the front the political atmosphere in Petrograd had changed completely. The first coalition government itself was experiencing a crisis at the end of the second month of its existence. Three Constitutional-Democratic ministers resigned. The ostensible reason for their resignation was the alleged unjustified concessions granted by the Provisional Government to the Ukrainians. The actual reason, however, was the excessive dependence of the Provisional Government on the will of the Soviets and the alleged consequent violation of the principle of coalition, of the equality of the bourgeois and socialist elements in the government, with the resultant reflection on the authority of the Provisional Government. This was how the Central Committee of the Constitutional-Democratic party formulated the question.

The unfounded dissatisfaction of the Cadet ministers was of no particular significance and, under calmer and more normal conditions, the crisis would in all probability have been adjusted quickly and without trouble.

The crisis was not in itself important but the departure of the bourgeois ministers gave the Bolsheviki a convenient excuse for a new mutiny, under the slogan: "All power to the Soviets!"

On July sixteenth came grave news from Korniloff's army; the eighth army had been compelled to evacuate Kalusch under increasing pressure from the enemy. On the Western Front of General Denikin, whose army was now to take the offensive, the situation was likewise serious. It was absolutely imperative that I leave for the front and my departure had been set for the same day, July sixteenth.

Immediately, before my departure from the capital, motor lorries filled with unidentified armed men appeared in the streets of Petrograd. Some of these motor lorries were canvassing the barracks, calling upon the soldiers to join in the armed uprising already under way. Others scurried about the city looking for me. One of these bands broke through the gate of Premier Lvoff's office, on the ground floor of the Ministry of the Interior, almost immediately after I had left the place. And my train had hardly left for the front when another motor lorry rushed up to the station. The armed band carried a red flag with the inscription: "The first bullet for Kerensky."

On July seventeenth, while inspecting our front line positions in the company of General Denikin and representatives of the army committee, disquieting telegrams began to pour in upon me. The uprising in Petrograd was spreading. Some regiments were joining it openly. Others, of the better type, like the Preobrajensk, Somenovsk and Izmailovsk regiments, had proclaimed themselves "neutral" in the fight of the Bolsheviki against the Provisional Government. The government meetings were transferred to the building of the district military staff. The Tauride Palace, seat of the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets and of the Executive Committee of the

CATASTROPHE

Petrograd Soviet, was surrounded by mutinous soldiers and red guards. These "class conscious proletarians" sought to lynch some of the leaders (Tseretelli, Chernoff and others) of the majority of the Soviets, which had refused to help in the transfer of all political power into the hands of the Soviets.

The tremendous significance of the enlistment in the Provisional Government of representatives of the socialist parties and the Soviet became particularly clear in these critical moments, for the socialist ministers and the leaders of the Soviet majority in general at the Tauride Palace were the ones who bore the main burden of the pressure of the soldiery and the proletarian riff-raff incited and infuriated by the Bolsheviks.

It was precisely in these critical hours of July seventeenth, that the process begun early in May reached its completion: between the Bolsheviks and the Russian democracy occurred the final, decisive break. The overwhelming majority of the Russian democracy emphatically repudiated the slogan, "All power to the Soviets!" This luring slogan became now only the tactical mask of the Bolsheviks in their fight for the dictatorship of their party.

The difficult and uncertain situation around the Tauride Palace was resolved by the appearance on the scene of government troops rushed to relieve the Soviet majority. On their way to the palace the government's Cossacks were suddenly fired upon, seven of them being killed and thirty wounded. These were the only victims of the government's "repressions." The mutinous mobs surrounding the Soviet dispersed at the first shot fired into the air by the government troops.

It is not difficult to imagine the effect produced at

THE BATTLE

the front by the uprising in the capital. In reply to the telegrams pouring in upon me from Petrograd I demanded the immediate application of severest measures for suppression of the mutiny. I insisted upon the immediate arrest of all the Bolshevik leaders. But nothing came of my telegrams. I then decided to hasten back to Petrograd for a few days. En route, near Polotzk, my train barely escaped being wrecked, when it collided with a locomotive sent by some one in a direction towards my speeding train. Our engineer managed to reduce the speed of the train in time so that only the forward platform of my car was demolished.

At Polotzk I was met by Terestchenko, who came into my car and reported in detail the events in Petrograd on the last day of the Bolshevik uprising (July eighteenth). There was one development in all this, however, which, despite the positive, wholesome effect it had on the troops, was to both of us a real catastrophe.

Late in the evening, July seventeenth, Minister of Justice Pereverzeff released to the press that part of the material collected by the Provisional Government concerning the treason of Lenin, Zinovieff and other Bolsheviks which had already been placed in the hands of the prosecuting officials. On July eighteenth, this material was widely published in the newspapers, after being distributed during the night, in leaflet form, among the Guards regiments. The exposé produced a shattering impression on the troops. The hesitant regiments immediately dropped their hesitation and came to the support of the government, while those supporting the Bolsheviks lost all their "revolutionary" ardor and energy. On July eighteenth, the uprising was quickly suppressed and Lenin's own citadel, the

THE CATASTROPHE

Ksheshinsky Palace, was occupied by government troops.

But we of the Provisional Government lost forever the possibility of establishing Lenin's treason in final form, supported by documentary evidence. For Fuerstenberg-Ganetsky, then approaching the Finnish frontier, where he was to have been arrested on his way to Petrograd, turned back to Stockholm. With him went back also the decisively incriminating document which we knew he had on his person. Immediately upon Pereverzeff's release to the press of the confidential data in his possession, on the eve of my return from the front, Lenin himself and Zinovieff likewise managed to escape from Petrograd into Finland.

In defense of the action of the Minister of Justice it can only be said that he did not know of the preparations for Ganetsky's arrest, which was to have sealed the fate of the Bolsheviki. But, even under the circumstances, the release for publication of material of such tremendous importance without the consent of the Provisional Government was quite unpardonable. After a very spirited conversation on this matter, Minister of Justice Pereverzeff was compelled to resign from the government. It is quite certain that all the later events of the summer of 1917 and Russian history, in general, would have taken quite a different course if Terestchenko had been able to conclude his difficult task of exposing Lenin and if, in consequence, it had been proved in court, by all the rules of evidence, that Lenin was committing the monstrous crime of treason.

At six o'clock in the evening, July nineteenth, I arrived from the front at Czarskoselsky railway station in Petrograd. Into my service car came my as-

THE BATTLE

sistant at the War Ministry, General Polovtsoff, commander of the Petrograd military district and other officials. On receiving General Polovtsoff's report I immediately requested his resignation because of the confusion exhibited by him during the uprising and his failure to obey my demands for extreme measures against the traitors. (Urgent measures had finally been taken by Assistant War Minister Jakubovitch.)

From the station we went directly to the Staff Headquarters of the Petrograd military district, where the Provisional Government was in session, surrounded by bivouacs. On the way we were greeted with joyous cheers by multitudes of people.

We arrived at the staff building. The order for the arrest of the leaders of the uprising had not yet been given. Without going upstairs into the room where Prince Lvoff and other members of the government were, I immediately ordered the staff officers in authority to prepare a list of the Bolsheviks subject to arrest, to submit it to me for approval and to begin at once the search for and imprisonment of the leaders of the traitorous mutiny.

Then Terestchenko and I went upstairs to see Prince Lvoff. The publication in the press of the partial material concerning the treason of the Bolsheviks had created in the leading socialist circles of the Soviet quite a different impression than that provoked among the troops on the critical night of July sixteenth.

The absence, in the published material, of conclusive documentary proof of Lenin's treason and the publication of the data in newspapers hostile not only to the Bolsheviks but to the Soviets as well to the surprise of the socialist ministers who had had no knowledge as yet of the nature of the material and the extreme patriotic wrath aroused by the revelations among

THE CATASTROPHE

the population had greatly excited the Soviet leaders. This excitation was accentuated by the physical excesses committed by soldiers and officers against the Bolshevik traitors first to be taken into custody (such as Kozlowsky), and the appearance in the streets of volunteer bands of officers and military cadets in search of Bolsheviki. All this put the Soviet leaders on guard. In these militant excesses of injured patriotism they saw distant visions of some advancing "counter-revolution." An acute fit of fear seized the Soviet circles, which soon took on the form of a veritable panic.

The Bolsheviki themselves, in the Tauride Palace, naturally kept strict silence. But certain persons from the Left wing of the Social-Democratic and Socialist-Revolutionist parties, close to the Bolsheviki, immediately set up a tumultuous cry of "slander," saying that the "misled but honest" fighters were being slandered by counter-revolutionists hiding behind the Provisional Government and the district military staff. In consequence, the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets passed a resolution declaring that the arrest of the Bolshevik leaders would be premature, pending investigation of the facts made public in the press. In other words, the Soviet leaders decided to prevent, if possible, the arrest of Lenin and his lieutenants. For this purpose a delegation had been dispatched to the government at Staff Headquarters. And, indeed, upon my entering Prince Lvoff's office, I found in the room a number of prominent members of the All-Russian Executive Committee of Soviets and of the Executive Committee of the Congress of Peasants, who were "maintaining contact" with the government in an effort to prevent the arrests in question.

THE BATTLE

I said nothing concerning the order I had just given below, knowing that, in view of the attitude of staff officers, the necessary arrests would be made as quickly as possible. The rest did not interest me then and I was ready to assume all the consequences of my move. In the event of an open conflict between the government and the Soviet representatives on the question of the arrests, we would have had the support not only of the army at the front but also of the entire revolutionary garrison in the capital itself. Of this there could be no doubt.

During our conversation I managed to inform Prince Lvoff quickly of the preparations for the arrests and, of course, received his full approval. Among those ordered arrested as traitors were Lenin, Zinovieff, Kozlowsky, Mme. Sumenson, Fuerstenberg-Ganetsky, the German citizen Helfandt (Parvus), Alexandra Kollontay and the military leaders of the uprising, Lieutenant Ilyin (Raskonlinkoff), Roschal and Sub-Lieutenant Semashko. All these persons were arrested, with the exception of Lenin and Zinovieff, who, as I have already said, had fled into hiding after the publication of the incriminating material, and of Parvus and Ganetsky, who were outside of Russia. In a few days Trotsky and Lunacharsky were also arrested.

At midnight I received the first telegram from the Southwestern Front telling of the break by the Germans through our line at Zlotcheff, in the direction of Tarnopol. With the telegram in my hands I returned to the room where the Provisional Government was meeting. The representatives of the Soviet were also present. Controlling myself with difficulty I read aloud the entire telegram and turning to the Soviet delegates, I asked them: "I trust that now you will no longer object to the arrests?"

THE CATASTROPHE

There was no reply.

But the silence was more eloquent than any possible answer. All of them now realized quite clearly the connection between the blow at the front and the attempt at an explosion in the interior of the country.

Several days later, on my inspection of our front lines at Molodchno, on the eve of the offensive of General Denikin's army, occurred the following unsavory incident. Passing a line of trenches we noticed a small group of soldiers, huddled together in a corner, busily engaged in reading something. On observing our approach the soldier who had in his hands some kind of a leaflet hastily sought to hide it. One of my adjutants managed, however, to spring forward in time and seize the mysterious leaflet. It was a copy of the *Tovaristch*,* dated two weeks before the Bolshevik uprising in Petrograd, but which the paper in our hands reported as an already accomplished fact. Of course, the article reporting the uprising contained no details but told how the proletariat and garrison of Petrograd, indignant at the "unnecessary blood-shedding" by Kerensky and Brusiloff at the front, had risen against the Provisional Government, and of the enthusiasm and sympathy which the uprising had provoked in Moscow and other Russian cities.

Running somewhat ahead in my narrative I may say here that the same thing happened at the beginning of November. From Stockholm we received copies of proclamations telling of the Bolshevik uprising in Petrograd about ten days before it had actually begun.

* *Tovaristch—Comrade*—was one of the publications issued by the German command on the Russian Front for distribution in the Russian trenches. It was printed in Vilna, occupied by the Germans in 1915.

CHAPTER XI

THE NATION'S VICTORY

IN looking back on the events of July, I must say that the failure of the Bolshevik uprising, together with the rapid retreat of our troops in Galicia, contributed to the strengthening of the feeling of patriotism and national responsibility among the masses of the people and in the leading circles of the Left, socialist, anti-Bolshevist parties.

The course of events in Russia between March and November, 1917, is usually conceived as a process of one color, of gradual but unceasing and constantly increasing disintegration of the country. In reality, however, Russia moved in those months along a zigzag line. Up until the middle of September (the period of the Korniloff rebellion) Russia advanced forward, with the line of progress accompanied by some drops and setbacks, but marked by steady diminution of revolutionary chaos and the development of political strength and wisdom. After the crushing of the Bolsheviks, in July, the process of convalescence gathered exceptional momentum. But it was halted suddenly by the madness of honest but politically ignorant and impatient generals. From the middle of September Russia began to move back with equally exceptional speed to dissolution and chaos.

Together with the new defeat of the Russian troops at the front came a nation-wide wave of anti-Bolshevist assaults. Bolshevik committees and newspapers were being wrecked everywhere in the interior. In all the

THE CATASTROPHE

provincial centers the Soviets were firmly in the hands of defensivist elements, patriotic, constructive and eager to restore the national structure. The representation of the Bolsheviki in the Executive Committee of the Soviets and in the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets was reduced almost to zero. Hand in hand with the removal of all Bolsheviki from the Soviet machinery, it was becoming increasingly recognized by the Soviet leaders that the Soviets were not and could not be organs of government but were merely instruments useful in the process of transition to a new, ordered, democratic state.

The new laws worked out by the first cabinet of the Provisional Government, providing for a comprehensive system of municipal and zemstvo self-government, on the basis of universal, proportional, equal suffrage, including woman suffrage, came into force. At the beginning of August we find municipal dumas in two hundred cities already elected on the basis of the new law. At the end of September six hundred and fifty of the seven hundred cities of Russia had elected such new municipal dumas. Not quite so rapidly, due to rural conditions, but nevertheless at good speed moved the reorganization of the zemstvos along broad, democratic lines. The tremendously powerful development of the cooperatives, stimulated by the Provisional Government's cooperative law, created an extremely sound basis for the growth of a democratic state. The initial anarchic period of irresponsible proletarian action was being transformed gradually into a healthy trade-union movement, in which the Bolsheviki occupied a position of little influence on the extreme left flank. The authority of the government commissars in the army was growing steadily, in accordance with the government's plan of bringing the

THE NATION'S VICTORY

army back through the agency of the commissars, as connecting links from the committee system as established in March, to normal unity of command.

On July twenty-first, I again repeated my last order for the merciless application of armed force against insubordination at the front. I called the attention of the commissars and commanders to the Provisional Government's proclamation of July nineteenth, prohibiting agitation against the government and the War among the troops. Simultaneously I telegraphed an order to General Headquarters demanding "the removal and prosecution of commanders showing the slightest reluctance to apply force." On July twentieth I had arrested the delegation of the General Committee of the Baltic Fleet, upon its arrival in Petrograd to help the Bolsheviki "arrest Minister of Justice Pereverzeff and Assistant Minister of the Navy Dudyrenko." The rule adopted by the government upon its formation, in the first days of the Revolution, not to disarm or to remove from Petrograd the military units which had taken part in the revolutionary movement, a rule tending to disorganize and pervert the garrison, was abolished. Henceforward the government granted commanders the right to reorganize the regiments of the Petrograd garrison and send them to the front. On July twenty-first an order was made public, by unanimous decision of the Provisional Government, restoring capital punishment and providing for the establishment of court-martial at the front. At the same time the government restored military censorship, giving to the Minister of the Interior, by agreement with the Minister of War, the right to suppress newspapers and fly-by-night sheets, to prohibit meetings, make arrests without the usual court warrants, to expel from Russia by executive order persons con-

THE CATASTROPHE

sidered dangerous to the safety of the nation and in general to take the measures found necessary in the interest of national security and defense.

Of course, these measures for the strengthening of the government did not meet with instant approval by everybody. In the minds of many political figures who were removed from sympathy with the Left, the strengthening of the revolutionary Government's administrative power aroused unpleasant memories of the police lawlessness of the old régime. Particularly disquieting to public opinion were the measures effecting the press.

The suppression of Bolshevik papers, particularly at the front, naturally met with universal approval. But when the situation reached a point where it was necessary to forbid the further publication of two big newspapers in the capital—Maxim Gorky's ultraradical *Novaya Zhsn* and the extremist-conservative *Novoye Vremia*—there arose a cry of sharp protest from all political and literary circles, without exception. People said that Kerensky wished to restore for the press the régime of Pleve (the universally hated minister of the interior under Nicholas II, assassinated at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War). The right of administrative arrest actually became one of the causes of the dispute between the Provisional Government and the representatives of the Constitutional-Democratic party at the time of the new cabinet crisis, following the Bolshevik uprising.

Faithful to the doctrine of government by law, the liberal jurists protested emphatically against the "lawlessness the government was legalizing." To be sure, the same party demanded from the government extreme lawlessness, *i.e.*, the widest possible administrative struggle against the Bolsheviks, but the partial

THE NATION'S VICTORY

inconsistency was determined by the fact that the proposed administrative expulsions from Russia and the administrative arrests threatened principally at that time, in August, not revolutionists on the Left but opponents on the Right, who had begun with increasing boldness to speak up in favor of the developing movement for a military dictatorship.*

MY ASSUMPTION OF THE PREMIERSHIP

On July twentieth, the day after my return from the front, Prince George Lvoff left the Provisional Government. The situation had become too difficult for his mild manner of governing. At the same cabinet meeting at which the resignation of the prince was accepted, I was named premier, retaining also my post of minister of war and marine.

The new government crisis began to develop seriously only after the departure of the prince.

On July twenty-second, the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets and the Executive Committee of the Congress of Peasants, in a joint manifesto to the country, proclaimed the Provisional Government as "the government for the Salvation of the Fatherland and the Revolution." The manifesto called upon the soldiers, peasants and workers to grant full confidence and obedience to the united, national people's government. At the same time, a general meeting of the regiments of the Petrograd garrison

* The opposite was also true. Some sections of the Left, socialist press, while demanding draconic police repressions against "counter-revolutionists" on the Right, expressed bitter indignation at the government's "lawlessness" with regard to the Bolsheviks. A curious picture was presented as a result, with the Provisional Government being simultaneously under "pressure" of both extreme flanks.—A. K.

THE CATASTROPHE

unanimously adopted a resolution expressing confidence "only in the Provisional Government."

However, confidence in the Provisional Government on the part of the revolutionary and democratic organizations was not enough. It was essential to restore the union of all the live forces of the country, upon which depended the quick rehabilitation of the nation. The places left vacant by the resignation of the three Cadet ministers had to be filled by men of the same political and social ideas. In July this was even more important than it was in April or May, for now behind the Constitutional-Democratic party were organized all the political and social forces of the country representing the interests of the propertied classes, of the high command, the remnants of the old bureaucracy and even fragments of the aristocracy. By this I do not wish to accuse in any way the party headed by Miliukoff—which had in the past performed great service in the cause of Russian liberation—of having "changed its program and entered the service of reaction," as the Bolshevik demagogues put it. The Constitutional-Democratic party had retained its entire ideology. Only the human material filling its ranks had changed radically. It must be remembered that all the parties to the right of the liberal center had disappeared after the Revolution, while the Cadet party itself had become the right flank of Russian political life.*

It was quite evident that the formation of a national

* The left flank was occupied by the Bolsheviks and the extreme elements of the Mensheviks and Socialists-Revolutionists. The center was composed of Menshevik Social-Democrats, Laborites, Populist-Socialists, backed by the cooperatives, the majority of municipal dumas chosen on the basis of universal suffrage, the front and army committees, etc.

THE NATION'S VICTORY

government standing above all parties and partisanship required the inclusion of responsible representatives of the right flank of the political spectrum, in the persons of those members of this group who after the upheaval of March twelfth had adopted an outspoken republican attitude.

The spokesmen of the Socialist parties and the leaders of the Soviets quite frankly expressed the aim of filling the vacant posts in the Provisional Government, after the exit of Prince Lvoff, without resort to the Constitutional-Democrats. The cabinet situation remained uncertain from July twentieth to July twenty-sixth, for on the very day of my appointment as premier I had to return to the front. Upon my return from Denikin's army, on or about July twenty-seventh, all the ministers placed their portfolios at my disposal. This collective resignation cleared the road for filling the ministerial vacancies.

At first, after the outbreak of the Revolution, the Provisional Government was seemingly appointed by the Temporary Committee of the Duma and it had to seek agreement with the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. The second cabinet of the Provisional Government was formed in cooperation with representatives of the respective parties, the Soviet and the Temporary Committee of the Duma. Now the formation of the new cabinet of the Provisional Government was placed solely in the hands of its premier, which naturally made the future cabinet more independent of exterior party pressure.

The negotiations between the Premier and the central committees of the respective parties continued for ten days. Once more there were interminable programmatic disputes. Long letters were written, in which the points at issue between the respective parties

THE CATASTROPHE

were purposely accentuated for bargaining purposes. Naturally this served only to irritate the opponents but in no way changed the substance of the discussion. Moreover, although formally I was given complete freedom of action in the selection of the ministers, I found myself confronted by ultimatums from the respective parties and organizations objecting to some candidates or demanding the appointment of others.

I personally was placed in quite a strange position: under the political circumstances of the moment I bore full responsibility for the fate of the nation, yet I did not have the simple right to choose freely my immediate coworkers, for whose activity in the government I could really and with a clear conscience hold myself responsible before the people. My situation became all the more difficult because both the contending camps (the bourgeois and the democratic) maintained equally that it was absolutely essential that I assume the premiership of the Provisional Government. In fact, they saw no other candidate acceptable for the post. All the parties collectively wished to work with me, but every one of them individually placed before me conditions obviously unacceptable to the others. The party bargaining for the vacant ministerial seats continued to grow more and more heated. Meanwhile, the prolongation of the cabinet crisis aggravated the already difficult situation in the country and particularly at the front, where the pressure of the German troops served to stimulate what on the whole was a natural and wholesome feeling of patriotic concern, though it did not at all moments assume proper form among the officers.

It became evident that the Russian political parties, with none of which I was completely in agreement and

THE NATION'S VICTORY

among all of which I had friends and supporters, had to be placed before a clear alternative: either they themselves assume full responsibility for the fate of the nation or they must give me at least some measure of freedom to do what I considered necessary for the country, regardless of party doctrines and self-interest.

On August third I divested myself of all offices and titles, turned over all current affairs to the Vice-Premier and left secretly for Tsarskoye Selo. Immediately the central committee of all the parties sent out urgent invitations to a meeting of extraordinary political importance. On the evening of the day of my departure an historic meeting of responsible representatives of all the parties upon which the government supported itself took place in the Malachite Hall of the Winter Palace. I do not wish to describe that which I did not witness. I know only that the meeting lasted all night, adjourning at four o'clock in the morning. Finding themselves face to face with the question of responsibility for the country no one of those present ventured to take the responsibility upon himself. The meeting adjourned finally with the decision to entrust me again with filling the posts of the Provisional Government as I saw fit, without being hampered by pressure, claims or demands from any of the parties. To be sure, this decision was immediately violated by both sides—the Left and the Right. By both sides I was informed "quite privately": "Of course, you are entirely free to choose the members of the government, but if you invite this or that person the central committee of our party will consider this participation in the government a matter concerning only himself." In other words I was "privately" threatened with militant hostility by the parties.

THE CATASTROPHE

Such party duplicity naturally had an extremely detrimental effect on the activity of the Provisional Government as constructed by me. It deprived the government of that unity so essential in such an extraordinarily difficult time. I resolved, however, to return to power, believing that the realization by all parties of the need of my participation in the government would give, for a time at least, an opportunity to fight for the restoration of Russia. Perhaps it was a cardinal mistake on my part to return to power at that moment. Perhaps I should have retired for the time being at the moment when outside of the central committees of the various parties and the circles of professional politicians, my prestige and popularity in the country were very great. Perhaps by preserving my authority with the people I might have saved something which would have been of use to Russia in the darkest days that were still ahead.

Perhaps? I do not know. At any rate it certainly would have been salutary so far as I myself was concerned. Contrary to the assertions of my adversaries on the Right and on the Left I had no "thirst for power." More than once I suggested to the unrestrained critics of the policy of the Provisional Government that they assume formal responsibility for the country, provided they did so without resort to uprising and mutiny. My return to the Winter Palace was motivated by the realization of my duty to the country.

Under the prevailing circumstances, when the country is threatened by internal dissolution and external disintegration [I wrote officially on August sixth, to the Vice-Premier] I consider it impossible to shirk the grave duty placed upon

THE NATION'S VICTORY

me by the representatives of the principal socialist, democratic and liberal parties.

In the same letter I laid down what to my mind were the guiding lines requisite for governing the country.

As the basis of the solution of this problem I place my unshakable conviction that the salvation of the Republic demands abandonment of party quarrels and that the national work of the salvation of the country, which concerns the people as a whole, must proceed under conditions and in forms dictated by the severe necessity of continuing the War, supporting the fighting capacity of the army and restoring the economic power of the nation.

After a night of mental and spiritual anguish, experienced likewise by all the participants of the meeting, I formed the new cabinet within twenty-four hours. Contrary to the practice of the first months of the Revolution, the members of the government, the bearers of supreme authority, were now formally released from any dependence or party committees, Soviets, etc. Their responsibility was now "only to the country and their own conscience." There were no more Soviet or Duma ministers. There were only ministers of the Russian government. The practice of collective, long ministerial declarations, of use only to the extreme party dogmatists, was likewise abandoned now.

The composition of the new cabinet corresponded to the nonpartisan, national governmental program.

Of the sixteen ministers only three were opponents of a bourgeois-democratic coalition. Two of these

THE CATASTROPHE

(Yureneff and Kokoshkin, representing the Constitutional-Democratic party) favored a purely bourgeois government, while the other (Minister of Agriculture Tchernoff, leader of the Socialists-Revolutionists) wanted a purely socialist government. All the other ministers were firm supporters of a government combining within itself all the creative political forces of the nation, regardless of party or class distinction.

The very marked change of popular attitude after the crushing of the Bolsheviki—the strengthening of the state and the independence of the governmental machinery from partisan political organizations—was evidenced by the fact that of the sixteen members of the government only two (Tchernoff, Socialist-Revolutionist, and Skobeleff, Social-Democrat, were connected closely with the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet.

The new situation was summarized well by Irakli Tseretelli, one of the noblest and most talented leaders of the Russian Social-Democracy (afterwards leader of the Georgian Social-Democratic party). With characteristic courage this leader, devoted disinterestedly to the cause of the democracy as a whole, recognized frankly the fundamental change that had come about in the correlation of the country's political and social forces.

"We have just experienced not only a cabinet crisis but a crisis of the Revolution," he said at a meeting of the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets and before the Executive Committee of the Peasant Congress. "A new era in the history of the Revolution has begun. Two months ago the soviets were stronger. Now we have become weaker, for the correlation of forces has changed to our disadvantage."

THE NATION'S VICTORY

Tseretelli urged full confidence in the government, realizing that the change that had taken place was entirely to the advantage of the country as a whole, for it strengthened the national consciousness of the people as well as the power and prestige of the state.

CHAPTER XII

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

IN the foregoing chapter I made reference to some of the measures taken by the Provisional Government which really made it possible for it to govern, *i.e.*, to command.

I will not undertake to enumerate here the many symptoms of convalescence in the administrative apparatus which were in evidence everywhere at the end of the summer of 1917. I will only say that government orders were now being executed as they were before the Revolution. The principle of departmental confidence, of political trust, without which no administrative machine can function properly, was restored.

The secret preparations for the equally secret transfer of the former Emperor and his family from Tsarskoye Selo to Tobolsk, Siberia, may serve as a striking illustration of the smooth operation of the administrative machine by the summer of 1917.

At the beginning, before the Revolution had evolved its burning problems, the masses were especially concerned about the fate of the Czar and his family. The press also began to discuss extensively, and with much relish, all Court matters which it had been forbidden to mention under the old régime. Although there was great excitement about the members of the imperial family after the Revolution had been well under way, they soon were almost forgotten. It seems incredible now that, after signing his abdication at Pskoff, the

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

Czar was able to proceed quite freely to General Headquarters at Mohileff "to take leave of his staff." The Provisional Government was in no way concerned about the Czar's movements and Prince Lvoff readily gave his consent to the Czar's journey. We remained so calm and unapprehensive because we were certain that he would find no sympathy or support anywhere in the army, and that he would make no effort to rally a following.

But, of course, this state of affairs could not last long. The former Emperor's prolonged sojourn at General Headquarters gave rise to rumors that his suite was negotiating with Germany for the dispatch of several German army corps into Russia, to save the autocracy. Absurd as they were, these rumors gained widespread circulation, and about a week after the crash an outburst of fury and hatred broke loose against the imperial family, particularly against the former Empress, Alexandra Feodorovna. On my visit to Moscow on March twentieth or twenty-first, the local Soviet angrily demanded a detailed account of the measures taken by the Government against the former Emperor and his family. The Soviet was so insistent that I finally said:

"As general public prosecutor I have the power to decide the fate of Nicholas II. But, comrades, the Russian Revolution is unstained by bloodshed and I will not permit it to be disgraced. I refuse to be the Marat of the Russian Revolution."

At the moment when I was saying this in Moscow, the Provisional Government in Petrograd was deciding to arrest Nicholas II and Alexandra Feodorovna. Following is the government's resolution ordering the arrest:

THE CATASTROPHE

1. That the ex-Emperor Nicholas II and his wife be deprived of their liberty and that the former be taken to Tsarskoye Selo.

2. That the deputies Bublikoff, Vershinin, Gribunin and Kalenin be delegated to go to Mohileff and request General Alexeyeff to place at their disposal a guard to act as escort for the former Emperor.

3. That the Duma members delegated to accompany the former Emperor from Mohileff to Tsarskoye Selo present a written report of the mission entrusted to them and

4. That this decision be made public.

Once under arrest, the former autocrat was to come under my immediate custody and jurisdiction. As far as I remember he was arrested on March twenty-second. Alexandra Feodorovna had been under arrest in the Alexandrovsky Palace at Tsarskoye Selo since March fourteenth. I may mention incidentally that the former Emperor's parting visit to General Headquarters had made a very bad impression on the rank and file of the army, inspiring the soldiers with distrust of the General Staff and especially of General Alexeyeff, and stimulating their suspicions of the counter-revolutionary sympathies of the high command. The leavetaking between Nicholas II and the staff was said to have been very touching. Many were even moved to tears. However, it did not occur either to the former Czar, or to those who saw him off, to resist his arrest or to protest against it. It was indeed remarkable how quickly the "faithful subjects" and most of the immediate attendants of the Czar and his family deserted them. Even the Czar's children, who were ill at that time, were left without any one to nurse

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

them and the Provisional Government had to provide the necessary help.

Deserted by most of those upon whom they had showered favors, the Czar's family was left helpless and miserable, at our mercy. I had hated the Czar when he was all-powerful and had done all I could to bring about his downfall. But I could not revenge myself upon a fallen enemy. On the contrary, I wanted this man to know that the Revolution was magnanimous and humane to its enemies, not only in word but in deed. I wished that for once in his life he should feel ashamed of the horrors that had been perpetrated in his name. This was the only revenge worthy of the Great Revolution, a noble revenge, worthy of the sovereign people. Of course, if the judicial inquiry instituted by the government had found proof that Nicholas II had betrayed his country either before or during the War, he would have immediately been tried by jury, but he was proved beyond doubt innocent of this crime. The Provisional Government had not yet finally decided the fate of the Czar and his family. We took it for granted that if the judicial inquiry into the conduct of the Rasputin clique should establish the innocence of the former Emperor and Empress, the whole family would be sent abroad, probably to England. I mentioned this suggestion in Moscow and it aroused great indignation in the Soviets and in the Bolshevik press. The demagogues represented the suggestion as an actual decision and even as an accomplished fact.

The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet had received "reliable" information that the Czar's departure had been fixed for the night of March twentieth and there was general confusion. The Committee sent out orders along all the railways to

THE CATASTROPHE

have the Czar's train stopped and that night the Alexandrovsky Palace at Tsarskoye Selo was surrounded by troops in armored motor cars and searched. I heard that the leader of the searching party had intended to remove the Czar, but changed his mind at the last moment. All these plans had been kept secret from the government in order to catch us in the act! Of course, the Soviet expedition failed to reveal any preparations for the Czar's departure but, nevertheless, on the following day the Soviet issued a long report describing its triumph over the "underhand dealings" of the government.

The Soviet demagogues kept up a recurrent agitation about the condition of the imperial family. They even demanded persistently that the whole family, or at least, the Czar and the Czarina be transferred to the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. Other demands called for the treatment of the imperial family as ordinary prisoners, or for their transfer to Kronstadt, there to be under the guard of the Kronstadt crews. The guards at Tsarskoye Selo were criticized for their alleged carelessness and leniency, whereupon the guards themselves, who had considered it a particular honor to watch over the former Czar, lost their heads and, in turn, demanded more severity towards the prisoners.

I remember clearly my first interview with the former Emperor, which took place at the end of March, at the Alexandrovsky Palace. On my arrival at Tsarskoye Selo I inspected the entire palace thoroughly and inquired into the regulations of the guard and the general régime under which the imperial family was being kept. On the whole I approved of the situation, making only a few suggestions for improvement to the commandant of the palace. Then I asked

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

Count Benkendorff, former marshal of the Court, to inform the Czar that I wished to see him and the Empress. The miniature Court, composed of the few retainers who had not deserted the former monarch, still kept up the ceremonial. The old count, sporting a monocle, listened to me and answered: "I will let His Majesty know." He treated me as if I were some one come, as in the old days, to be presented to the Czar, or a minister reporting for an audience. In a few moments he returned and announced solemnly: "His Majesty has consented to receive you." This seemed a trifle ridiculous and out of place, but I did not want to destroy the count's last illusions, so I did not explain to him that his manner was somewhat behind the times. He still considered himself First Marshal to His Majesty the Emperor. It was all they had left. I did not disturb it.

To tell the truth, I had been looking forward to the interview with the former Czar with some anxiety, and feared I might lose my temper when I came face to face for the first time with the man I had always hated. Only the day before, leaving for Tsarskoye Selo, I had said to a member of the Provisional Government, apropos of the abolition of capital punishment: "I think, the only death warrant I could bear to sign would be that of Nicholas II." But I was anxious that the ex-Emperor should meet with nothing but the most scrupulously correct treatment from me.

I was trying to pull myself together as we passed through an interminable succession of apartments, preceded by a flunkey. At last we came to the children's rooms. Leaving me before the closed door leading into the inner apartments, the count went in to announce me. Returning almost immediately, he said:

THE CATASTROPHE

"His Majesty invites you." He threw open the door, himself remaining on the threshold.

My first glimpse of the scene, as I was approaching the Czar, changed my mood altogether. The whole family was standing huddled in confusion around a small table near a window in the adjoining room. A small man in uniform detached himself from the group and moved forward to meet me, hesitating and smiling weakly. It was the Emperor. On the threshold of the room in which I awaited him he stopped, as if uncertain what to do next. He did not know what my attitude would be. Was he to receive me as a host or should he wait until I spoke to him? Should he hold out his hand, or should he wait for my salutation? I sensed his embarrassment at once as well as the confusion of the whole family left alone with a terrible revolutionary. I quickly went up to Nicholas II, held out my hand with a smile, and said abruptly "Kerensky," as I usually introduce myself. He shook my hand firmly, smiled, seemingly encouraged, and led me at once to his family. His son and daughters were obviously consumed with curiosity and gazed fixedly at me. Alexandra Feodorovna, stiff, proud and haughty, extended her hand reluctantly, as if under compulsion. Nor was I particularly eager to shake hands with her, our palms barely touching. This was typical of the difference in character and temperament between the husband and wife. I felt at once that Alexandra Feodorovna, though broken and angry, was a clever woman with a strong will. In those few seconds I understood the psychology of the whole tragedy that had been going on for many years behind the palace walls. My subsequent interviews with the Emperor, which were very few, only confirmed my first impression.

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

I inquired about the health of the members of the family, informed them that their foreign relatives were solicitous about their welfare and promised to transmit, without delay, any communications they might wish to send to those relatives. I asked if they had any complaints to make, how the guards were behaving and whether they needed anything. I begged them not to be anxious or distressed but to rely on me. They thanked me and I began to take my leave. Nicholas II inquired about the military situation and wished me success in my new and difficult office. Throughout the spring and summer he followed the War, reading the newspapers carefully and interrogating his visitors.

This was my first meeting with "Nicholas the Bloody." After the horrors of the Bolshevik reaction, this appellation sounds ironical. We have seen other tyrants bathing in blood, tyrants more revolting because they come from the people, or even from the intelligentsia, and who have raised their hands against their own brethren. I do not mean to say that Bolshevism justifies Czarism. No, the autocracy was the original cause of the Communist tyranny. It is the consequences of the autocracy which have brought such suffering upon the people.

Nevertheless, I think that the Red Terror has already made some people, and will make many others, reconsider their judgment about the personal responsibility of Nicholas II for all the horrors of his reign. I for one do not think he was the outcast, the inhuman monster, the deliberate murderer I used to imagine. I began to realize that there was a human side to him. It became clear to me that he had acquiesced in the whole ruthless system without being moved by any personal ill will and without even realizing that it was bad. His mentality and his circumstances kept him

THE CATASTROPHE

wholly out of touch with the people. He heard of the blood and tears of thousands upon thousands only through official documents, in which they were represented as "measures" taken by the authorities "in the interest of the peace and safety of the State." Such reports did not convey to him the pain and suffering of the victims, but only the "heroism" of the soldiers "faithful in the fulfillment of their duty to the Czar and the Fatherland." From his youth he had been trained to believe that his welfare and the welfare of Russia were one and the same thing, so that the "disloyal" workmen, peasants and students who were shot down, executed or exiled seemed to him mere monsters and outcasts of humanity who must be destroyed for the sake of the country and the "faithful subjects" themselves.

Such explanations of the conduct of Nicholas II had not seemed convincing. But now, when one sees that neither close ties with the people, nor education, nor lofty socialist ideals, nor fine records of political and social work can prevent men from demonstrating their instincts of domination and unbridled ambition at the expense of the blood and tears of men, women and children, one can easily believe that Nicholas II in comparison with these blood-stained "revolutionists," was a man not altogether devoid of human feeling, whose nature was perverted by his surroundings and traditions.

When I left him after my first interview I was very much worked up. What I had seen of the former Empress made her character quite clear to me and corresponded with what every one who knew her had said about her. But Nicholas, with his beautiful blue eyes and his whole manner and appearance, was a puzzle to me. Was he deliberately using his art of charming,

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

inherited from his ancestors? Was he an experienced actor, an artful hypocrite? Or was he a harmless innocent and entirely under the thumb of his wife? It seemed incredible that that slow-moving, diffident simpleton, who looked as if he were dressed in some one else's clothes, had been Emperor of All Russia, Czar of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland, etc., etc., and had ruled over an immense empire for twenty-five years! I do not know what impression Nicholas II would have made upon me had I seen him when he was still the monarch on the throne, but, when I first met him after the Revolution, I was struck chiefly by the fact that nothing about him suggested that only a month before so much had depended on his word. I left him with the firm determination of solving the riddle of this strange, terrible and ingratiating personality.

After my first visit I determined to send a new commandant to the Alexandrovsky Palace, a man of my own who would set my mind at rest about the imperial family. I could not leave them alone with the few faithful attendants who still clung to the old ceremonial * and the soldiers of the Guard who kept close watch over them. Later, there were rumors of a "counter-revolutionary" plot in the palace simply because the "court" used to send a bottle of wine to the officer on guard, for his dinner. It was necessary to have a faithful, intelligent and tactful intermediary in the palace. I chose Colonel Korovichenko, a military jurist and a veteran of the Japanese and European Wars, whom I knew to be a courageous and upright man. I was justified in putting my trust in him, for

* Count Benkendorff, Naryshkina, lady-in-waiting; Prince Dolgoruky, Dr Botkin, Count Buchevden, Schneider, etc.

THE CATASTROPHE

he kept his prisoners strictly isolated and managed to inspire them with respect for the new authorities.

In the course of my occasional short interviews with Nicholas II at Tsarskoye Selo, I tried to fathom his character and, I think, on the whole I succeeded. He was an extremely reserved man, who distrusted and utterly despised mankind. He was not well educated, but he had some knowledge of human nature. He did not care for anything or any one except his son, and perhaps his daughters. This terrible indifference to all external things made him seem like some unnatural automaton. As I studied his face, I seemed to see behind his smile and his charming eyes a stiff, frozen mask of utter loneliness and desolation. I think he may have been a mystic, seeking communion with Heaven patiently and passionately, and weary of all earthly things. Perhaps everything on earth had become insignificant and distasteful to him because all his desires had been so easily gratified. When I began to know this living mask I understood why it had been so easy to overthrow his power. He did not wish to fight for it and it simply fell from his hands. Authority, like everything else, he held too cheap. He was altogether weary of it. He threw off authority as formerly he might have thrown off a dress uniform and put on a simpler one. It was a new experience for him to find himself a plain citizen without the duties or robes of state. To retire into private life was not a tragedy for him. Old Madame Naryshkina, the lady-in-waiting, told me that he had said to her: "How glad I am that I need no longer attend to these tiresome interviews and sign those everlasting documents! I shall read, walk and spend my time with the children." And, she added, this was no pose on his part. Indeed, all those who watched him in his cap-

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

tivity were unanimous in saying that Nicholas II seemed generally to be very good-tempered and appeared to enjoy his new manner of life. He chopped wood and piled up the logs in stacks in the park. He did a little gardening and rowed and played with the children. It seemed as if a heavy burden had fallen from his shoulders and that he was greatly relieved.

His wife, however, was a proud and strong woman with altogether earthly ambitions, who felt keenly the loss of her authority and could not resign herself to the new state of affairs. She suffered from hysteria and was at times partly paralyzed. She depressed every one around her by her languor, her misery and her irreconcilable animosity. People like the former Empress never forget or forgive. While the judicial inquiry into the conduct of her immediate circle (Vyroubova, Voyeikova, Rasputin, etc.) was going on, I had to take certain measures to prevent her from acting in collusion with the Czar, in case they had to give testimony. It would be more true to say I had to prevent her from bringing undue influence to bear on her husband. So, while the investigation was in progress, I separated the couple, allowing them to meet only at meal times, when they were forbidden to allude to the past. I gave the Czar my reasons for this act of severity and asked him to help in carrying it out, so that no one should have anything to do with the matter beyond those who knew of it already—Korovichenko, Naryshkina and, I think, Count Benkendorff. They did all I asked and carried out my injunction strictly as long as it was necessary. Every one concerned told me what a remarkably good effect the separation had upon the Czar and how it made him livelier and altogether more cheerful!

When I told him that there was to be an investiga-

THE CATASTROPHE

tion and that Alexandra Feodorovna might have to be tried, he did not turn a hair and merely remarked: "Well, I don't think Alice had anything to do with it. Have you any proof?" To which I replied: "I do not know yet."

In all our conversations we avoided using names or titles and simply addressed each other as "you." "Well, so now Albert Thomas is with you: last year he dined with me. An interesting man. Remember me to him, please." (I delivered this message.)

The way he compared "last year" with "now" showed that Nicholas II may have at times brooded over the past, but we never really discussed the change in his position. We only touched upon such things casually and superficially. He seemed to find it difficult to mention these things and especially to speak of the men who had deserted and betrayed him so quickly. With all his contempt for mankind, he had not expected quite so much faithlessness. I gathered from the hints that slipped out in his conversation that he still hated Gutchkoff, that he considered Rodzianko shallow-minded, that he could not imagine what Miliukoff was like, that he respected Alexeyeff greatly and also Prince Lvoff to a certain extent.

Only during one incident did I see Nicholas II get excited like any other human being.

Either the Soviet of Soldiers and Workmen or the garrison Soviet (I forget which) had decided to follow the Petrograd example and organize an official funeral for the victims of the Revolution. It was to be held on Good Friday, in one of the main avenues of the park at Tsarskoye Selo, at some distance from the palace, but exactly opposite the windows of the rooms occupied by the imperial family. The Czar was to witness the ceremony from the windows of his gilded prison, to

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

see his guard with red banners paying the last honors to the fallen fighters for freedom. It was an extraordinarily poignant and dramatic episode. The garrison was still well in hand at that time and we were not afraid of any rioting. We even felt convinced that the troops wished to show their self-control and sense of responsibility, as indeed they did. But as the day of the ceremony approached, Nicholas II became more and more perturbed and begged me to have the funeral demonstration held somewhere else or, at least, to have it postponed for another day. For some reason or other he was especially anxious not to have it held on Good Friday, when he was fasting. Was he afraid of the crowd or was he thinking of other Good Fridays in the past?

However, when later on I told him that he must prepare for a long journey, he remained perfectly calm. It was at the beginning of August. Since early in the summer the question of the imperial family had been attracting too much attention, giving us a great deal of anxiety. People began to recall forgotten episodes of the Czar's reign, as the reactionaries appeared to grow hopeful and their opponents became filled with hatred and a thirst for revenge. The discipline of the Tsarskoye Selo garrison was weakening and I feared that, if there were new disturbances in Petrograd, the Alexandrovsky Palace would not be safe. In addition, *agents-provocateurs* had begun to circulate rumors about counter-revolutionary conspiracies and attempts to kidnap the Czar, which spread rapidly within the garrison. One night a motor car had broken through the fence of the palace park and it was said that the car had tried to reach the palace grounds. Of course, it was a case of nothing but hooliganism. But still we were obliged to place an extra guard where the

THE CATASTROPHE

fence had been broken. The disturbing rumors continued to spread, however, and finally I decided to transfer the Czar and his family temporarily to some remote place, some quiet corner, where they would attract less attention. Although the government's inquiry into the doings of the Rasputin clique had cleared the Empress, the royal family could not be sent abroad because Great Britain had refused to give hospitality, during the War, to relatives of its royal house. They could not with safety be sent to the Crimea, so I chose Tobolsk, a really remote place, without railway communications, and which was almost isolated from the world in winter. The governor's house at Tobolsk was fairly comfortable and tolerable accommodations could be arranged for the family.

We made the preparations for their departure with the utmost secrecy, for publicity might have led to all kinds of obstacles and complications. Not even all the members of the Provisional Government were informed of the imperial family's destination. In fact, only five or six persons in all Petrograd knew it. The ease and success with which we arranged the departure showed how much the authority of the Provisional Government had been strengthened by August. In March or April it would not have been possible to move the Czar without endless consultations with the Soviets, etc. But, on August fourteenth, the Czar and his family left for Tobolsk at my personal orders and with the consent of the Provisional Government. Neither the Soviet nor any one else knew of it until afterwards.

When the date for the departure had been settled, I explained the situation to the Czar and told him to prepare for a journey. I did not say where he was going, but only advised him to take as much warm

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

clothing as possible. The Czar listened attentively, and, when I told him not to be anxious, that the arrangement was being made for the benefit of his family, and generally tried to reassure him, he looked me straight in the face and said:

"I am not worrying. We believe you. If you say this is necessary I am sure it is "

And he repeated: "We believe you."

As he said this I thought of another scene, one that had taken place in days gone by—the trial of that remarkable man, Carl Trauberg, head of the Northern Terrorist Organization, before the Petrograd military district court. This organization had already had many successes, and was preparing for still more serious attacks, among them on the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevitch, Scheglovitoff and others. Trauberg was about to be condemned to death. General Nikiforoff presided. He was a brutal and cynical man, who held nothing sacred. All through the trial Trauberg had distinguished himself by his manly behavior, like a true revolutionist. Calmly, courageously and without hesitation, he was giving evidence against himself, to shield his friends. When the public prosecutor tried to trip him up and catch him contradicting himself, the judge, cynic that he was, turned upon the prosecutor and said sternly: "The court believes Trauberg; the court knows that he speaks the truth." I remember how the face of the accused flushed with joyful pride, and how there was a general movement in court—a tribute to the moral victory of the revolutionary spirit. Two days later Carl Trauberg was hanged "by order of His Majesty."

All this came back to me in a flash as I looked at the Czar. I think he read triumph in my eyes, for when he said "We believe you," I felt that all those

THE CATASTROPHE

who had perished for the victory of the Great Revolution were avenged at last. *He* believed *me*! He, the autocrat who had not really trusted any one, confided himself and his children to the Revolution. It was not I but the Revolution itself, which had conquered the arch-reactionary. A mob drunk with blood cannot understand such a revenge, such a triumph. The assassins now in power in Russia and all the so-called "practical politicians" will smile at such *navveté*, but I am convinced that this is the only kind of revenge worthy of a great revolution, which should always represent the triumph of human kindness and mercy.

The departure of the Czar and his family for Tobolsk took place on the night of August fourteenth. All the arrangements were completed to my satisfaction and, at about eleven o'clock in the evening, after a meeting of the Provisional Government, I went to Tsarskoye Selo to supervise the departure. I first made the round of the barracks and inspected the guards, chosen by the regiments themselves, to accompany the train and guard the Czar on his arrival at his destination. They were all ready and seemed cheerful and contented. There had been vague rumors in the town concerning the departure, and from early evening curious onlookers had begun to collect around the palace park. In the palace the final preparations were under way. Luggage was being brought out and stored in motor cars, etc. We were all rather on edge. Before their separation I permitted the Czar to see his brother, Michael Alexandrovitch. Naturally, I had to be present at this interview, much as I disliked the intrusion. The brothers met in the Emperor's study at about midnight. Both seemed much agitated. All their experiences of the last months came back to them. For a long time they were silent, and then

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

they began the casual, fragmentary conversation characteristic of such hurried interviews: "How is Alice?" "And how is mother?" asked the Grand Duke, etc. They stood facing each other, fidgeting all the while, and sometimes one would take hold of the other's hand or the buttons of his uniform.

"May I see the children?" Michael Alexandrovitch asked me.

"No," I answered. "I cannot prolong the interview."

"Very well," the Grand Duke said to his brother. "Kiss them for me."

They began to take leave of each other. Who could have thought that this was the last time they would ever meet!

This unusual and exciting night seemed to fill the Czar's young son with mischief. As I sat in the room near the Emperor's study, giving the final orders and awaiting news of the arrival of the train, I could hear the youngster running about noisily, trying to get across the corridor to where I was, to see what was going on there.

The time was passing and still the train from the Nikolayevsky Railway did not arrive. The employees had hesitated about making up the train and delayed carrying out orders until confirmed by some reliable authority. It was daylight by the time the train arrived. We motored over to where it was waiting, just outside the Alexandrovsky station. We had previously arranged the order of seating in the cars, but everything was muddled at the last moment.

For the first time I saw the former Empress simply as a mother, anxious and weeping. The son and daughters did not seem to mind the departure so much, though they too were excited and nervous at the last

THE CATASTROPHE

moment. Finally, after the last farewells had been said, the motor cars moved, with Cossacks in front and behind. The sun was already shining brightly when the convoy left the park, but fortunately the town was still asleep. When we reached the train we checked the list of those who were going. Another farewell and the train was off. They were leaving forever, but no one foresaw the terrible end that was awaiting them.

I must go back to an interview I had with Alexandra Feodorovna. Old Madame Naryshkina (who, by the way, considered the former Empress the cause of all the calamities of Russia and "Niki") was waiting in an adjoining room. We carried on the conversation in Russian, which Alexandra Feodorovna spoke hesitatingly and with a strong accent. Suddenly her face flushed and she flared up:

"I don't understand why people speak ill of me. I have always liked Russia from the time I first came here. I have always sympathized with Russia. Why do people think I am siding with Germany and our enemies? There is nothing German about me. I am English by education and English is my language."

She became so excited that it was impossible to continue the conversation. She may have thought at the time that she liked Russia, but to tell the truth she did not give me the impression of being sincere. I knew perfectly well that she had never liked Russia. I believe that, in spite of my careful approach to the subject, she realized that I was trying to learn from her what I could about the part her circle had taken in the scheming for a separate peace.

As I have said, I never really succeeded in understanding Alexandra Feodorovna or in discovering what her real aims had been, but of the members of

THE EX-CZAR AND HIS FAMILY

her circle whom I met (Voyeikova, Vyroubova, Protopopoff) she was undoubtedly the cleverest and the strongest, and no one could have made a fool of her. As I never saw Rasputin, I am unable to judge what influence or, rather, what hypnotic force he possessed. But, clever as he was, this scoundrel was, after all, an illiterate mouzhik and although his cunning may have made him an excellent interpreter of the plans and intrigues of others, he could not have had a political program of his own. However, I know definitely that from the beginning he was instinctively and violently opposed to the War. On the very eve of the declaration of war the Emperor sent a wire to Rasputin asking him what he should do. Rasputin had a short time before been stabbed by one of the women he had seduced and was lying ill in Pokrovskoye, his village on the Irtish River, near Tobolsk. A copy of his reply to the Czar fell into the hands of my friend, Sukhanoff, member of the Duma from Tobolsk. I do not remember the exact words of the reply, but the substance of it was: "Do not declare war. The people will again begin to cry, 'Down with this!' and 'Down with that!' You and your heir will get no good out of it."

It is well known that the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevitch had to get the mobilization order from Nicholas II almost by force. I have no doubt that Rasputin's telegram accounted, to a considerable extent, for the Czar's reluctance. I concluded, therefore, that Rasputin, opposed to the War because he instinctively felt its inevitable fatal consequences for the Romanoffs, was the cunning tool of those who were interested in promoting the policy of a separate peace. It is clear that some one cleverer and better versed in politics than all those Vyroubovas and Protopopoffs

[277]

THE CATASTROPHE

was using them to further his or her own policy. I do not know who that person was. At any rate, it is certain that Alexandra Feodorovna was directing the affairs of state during the last months of the autocracy, that she was the real ruler of the country. One had only to examine the visitors' book at the Alexandrovsky Palace, and see who were the people who called on the Empress, to understand the part she played in public affairs. It is also certain that she saw clearly that the condition of the country made it impossible to continue the War and retain the old methods of government at home. Whether she herself decided to make peace with Germany and chose the government of Protopopoff, Beliayeff, Scheglovitoff, Stuermer, and others, for this purpose, or whether some one behind her inspired her course of action is more or less immaterial. The outstanding fact is that she was the *de facto* head of the government that was leading the country straight into a separate peace. Whether any member of the Rasputin-Vyroubova circle was actually a German agent is not certain, but undoubtedly a whole German organization was sheltered behind them and they were, at any rate, quite ready to receive money and gifts of all kinds.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE

THE crisis of the Revolution, of which Tsere-telli spoke on the day of the formation of the second coalition cabinet of the Provisional Government, was in truth the crisis of the state. It was, as already indicated, the victory of the state. Russian democracy emerged from its Soviet shell. Its voice began to resound everywhere—in city councils, zemstvos, coöperatives, trade unions, etc. Once again, also, was heard the voice of the hitherto silenced organizations of propertied, middle-class Russia. The government, supporting itself on the country, felt the need of an organ of public opinion, expressing itself in some organized manner. For technical reasons and because of the recent cabinet crisis the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, set for October thirteenth, had to be postponed until December sixteenth.

This was too long an interval. A new Congress of Soviets would have been inadequate, for its opinion would have been regarded less than ever as the opinion of the whole of Russia. At the very beginning of the cabinet crisis, immediately after the departure of Prince Lvoff, the Provisional Government had decided to convoke an All-Russian State Conference in Moscow, with the purpose of finding therein a new support for the strengthening of the government. Now we were no longer confronted with this need. The government had gained new confidence and felt its

THE CATASTROPHE

strength. Nevertheless, it was conscious of the need of making an inventory, so to speak, of the nation's political forces, to determine more clearly the balance of their respective weight in the nation, and to give to the political parties themselves, to the Soviets and other organizations an opportunity to sense the growth of the social forces and social organization in the country. For this reason the new coalition cabinet, immediately upon its formation, affirmed the plan for convocation of the Moscow State Conference. The date of the meeting was set for August twenty-sixth.

On the day of the opening of the conference, the Bolshoy Theater in Moscow was filled with thousands of people, representing the very best elements of political, social, cultured and military Russia. Only a pitiful handful of monarchists and Bolsheviki, who had virtually been driven underground, did not send their representatives to this conference, truly expressive of the whole of Russia.

The Bolsheviki even tried to organize a general strike in Moscow, in protest against the "reactionary assembly" which was to demonstrate the loyalty of "Russia's subjects" to the "dictator Kerensky." In extreme Right circles it was likewise whispered: "Kerensky is going to Moscow to be crowned." And, indeed, under the thunder of oratorical speeches in the main hall of the Bolshoy Theater, in the lobbies and behind the scenes, was being born, as we shall soon see, the mad idea of a dictatorship. The man who was to be the bearer of the dictatorial robe was General Korniloff, a man brave in war but quite unversed in politics.

Outwardly, the conference presented a most interesting picture. Running from the stage to the main entrance was the middle aisle, dividing the conference

THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE

into two equal sides: on the left was democratic, peasant, Soviet, socialist Russia and on the right was liberal, bourgeois, propertied, capitalist Russia. The army was represented on the left by army committees and on the right by members of the commanding corps. Exactly opposite the main entrance, on the stage, sat the Provisional Government. My seat was precisely in the middle. On my left were the Democratic-Socialist ministers. On my right were the ministers from the bourgeoisie. The Provisional Government was the only center uniting both Russias into one. In this center I was the mathematical point of unity.

Those who attended the meetings of the Conference at the Bolshoy Theater in Moscow can never forget those days. All the complexity of political opinions, the entire gamut of social sentiments, the entire tension of the inner struggle, the entire force of patriotic concern, the entire fury of social hatred, all the pain of accumulated insults and injuries—all this flowed in a tempestuous, roaring stream towards the stage, to the table of the Provisional Government. Demands, accusations, complaints were heaped in a mass on the government table. Both sides wanted to help the government, from which some miraculous message was expected. Each of the two Russias wanted the government to be only with that particular side.

But the government was only on the side of the state, for we of the Provisional Government saw independently and as a whole what each of the struggling sides observed only from the point of view of the part that interested it alone. We saw that both sides were equally necessary to Russia. The significance of the Moscow Conference was, of course, not in the programs embodied in the various declarations, resolutions

THE CATASTROPHE

and speeches but in the determination of the measure of power represented by the various social organizations participating. The government sought to feel the pulse of the country, to sense its will. The representatives of the respective parties and organizations sought to weigh the authority of the government in the state: some aimed at strengthening it, while others searched for its Achilles' heel. The most acute, the most tense moment of the conference was the appearance of General Lavre Korniloff, Commander-in-Chief. For the Left side of the conference he was the symbol of future "counter-revolution." For the Right side he was almost a "national hero," destined to overthrow the "weak-willed Provisional Government, the prisoner of the Soviets," and to establish a strong authority.

Which of the two sides represented the majority of the people at that time, August twenty-sixth to twenty-eighth? The answer to this question was quite clear to all who were not blinded by party passion and social hatred. To learn the answer it was only necessary to examine the list of organizations which signed the declaration read by Tcheidze, President of the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets.

The list included the Committee itself, the Executive Committee of the Congress of Peasants, the committees representing the front and the army, the cooperative organizations, the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos and Municipalities, the All-Russian Railway Union, the majority of city councils elected on the basis of universal suffrage, etc. etc. In a word, on the Left was represented the Russia of the people, all the democratic, revolutionary elements of the country, into whose hands had fallen the entire apparatus of na-

THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE

tional and local administration. After six months of experience of the Revolution, this Russia recognized the supreme authority of the Provisional Government and, instead of the previous abstract declarations, it brought to the Moscow Conference a practical program for the political and economic restoration of the country, a program which, while not entirely suitable as the basis of immediate government policy, was none the less a realistic, concrete program. The social organizations and parties comprising the Left sector of the Moscow Conference represented collectively an unquestionable buttress of the state. They constituted the dam behind which the elemental class antagonisms of the lower strata of the population were still raging, fanned by Bolshevik demagoguery and German agents.

But who was on the Right? The entire financial and industrial aristocracy of the country. The élite of the urban liberal intelligentsia. These two forces were necessary to the new Russia. But at the Moscow Conference they were already represented by a majority of "has-beens," speaking for groups which as such had disappeared into history on March 12, 1917.

Here were representatives of the Duma, the State Council, the Union of the Landed Nobility appearing under its new name of the "Union of Landowners," former city and zemstvo officials, professors, journalists and, finally, representatives of the high command, the All-Russian Union of Officers, the Council of Cossacks, the Union of the Knights of St. George and other military organizations. As a matter of fact, the officers' organizations, headed by the commanding corps, represented the only physical force at the disposal of the entire Right sector of the conference. Shortly before the opening of the conference the prop-

THE CATASTROPHE

ertied elements of Russia had set up in Moscow a permanent political center under the name of the "Conference of Public Leaders." This conference became a real Soviet, the nucleus of what was then "white" Russia, and which, under certain circumstances, behaved exactly as did the Soviet in the first weeks of the Revolution.

On the last day of the conference occurred the celebrated scene when Tseretelli, chief spokesman of the Left wing of the conference, and Bublikoff, leading representative of industrial and financial Russia, shook hands on the stage of the Bolshoy Theater, symbolizing thus the union of all the people around the nonpartisan, national Provisional Government, the armistice between capital and labor in the name of the struggle for Russia. But at that very moment, behind the scenes of the conference, certain leaders of the Right sector, together with former and active commanders at the front, were signing the death warrant of the new coalition, of the union of the labor and bourgeois forces of the country, by giving their sanction to the mad effort of a pitiful group of officers and political adventurers to destroy the Provisional Government, *i.e.*, to destroy completely the sole levee which alone could save Russia from a new outburst of anarchy.

On my return from the Moscow Conference I felt more than ever that Russia could be saved only by following unswervingly the path along which the Provisional Government had led it from the very first day of the Revolution. To be sure, at the beginning of August there were only three members of the original Provisional Government in the cabinet—Terestchenko, Nekrassoff and I. But the changes in the composition of the ministry did not in any way

THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE

change the line of policy laid down by the government created by the Revolution. All three of us, who for more than six months had followed the course of events in Russia from day to day from the very central point of vantage, perceived how slowly but surely the new Russia was growing in strength and stability, overcoming one after another all political, economic and psychological obstacles. The end of the 1917 fighting season was drawing closer. The general inter-allied problem at the front was solved. Lenin was in hiding. The Soviets were relegated to the background of national life. The power of the state was consolidated. Within three months the Constituent Assembly was to meet, three months during which much hard work was yet to be done, but within the framework of a stronger, firmer state organization.

All this was quite clear to any one possessing any common sense, objective vision. It seemed that it was not too much to expect such objectivity from the political and cultured upper elements of Russia, who had but a few months before witnessed the dissolution of the monarchy and who had with their own hands felt all the ulcers of the old régime. They, the old, experienced political leaders should have understood better than others the tremendous, superhuman patience required in the governing of Russia in the first months following the catastrophe, the equal of which had not perhaps been witnessed since the period of the fall of the Roman Empire.

However, there was not enough patience!

The still shaky levee, protecting Russia from ruin and disintegration, was blown up by the hands of men who could have been accused of anything but lack of patriotism. But there is apparently a blind love of

THE CATASTROPHE

country which is worse than open hatred. The Moscow Conference became the prologue to a terrible drama which developed between Mohileff, the headquarters of the commander-in-chief, and Petrograd, seat of the Provisional Government.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CONSPIRATORS ON THE RIGHT

THE mad mutiny of the commander-in-chief, which opened the doors to the Kremlin for the Bolsheviki and to Brest-Litovsk for Ludendorff, was the final link in the conspiracies of the Right against the Provisional Government. Public opinion abroad has been inclined to regard the Korniloff movement as an almost unexpected outburst of incensed patriotism on the part of Korniloff and his supporters. In accordance with the picture portraying Russian history between March and November, 1917, as a process of gradual and increasing disintegration, Sovietization and Bolshevization of the state, the revolt of General Korniloff is presented as the heroic act of a self-sacrificing patriot, striving in vain to free Russia from a "weak-willed" government and to save his perishing country on the very brink of the precipice. I hope that what I have presented thus far has conveyed to the reader's mind a somewhat different picture, a picture of reality as against pure legend.

There was nothing sudden in the action of the people who prepared the conspiracy of the commander-in-chief against the government which had entrusted the army into his hands in the most critical months of the War. On the contrary, the conspiracy developed slowly, systematically, with cool calculation of all the factors involved affecting its possible success or failure. Nor was the motive of the conspiracy, so far as some

THE CATASTROPHE

of its backers were concerned, one of unselfish patriotism. On the contrary, the motive was extremely selfish—to be sure, not one of personal but of class selfishness. To avoid misunderstanding I want to append right here one qualification: in describing the motives of the criminal activity of the initiators and original leaders of the conspiracy I do not attribute these selfish class motives to General Korniloff and his close military supporters, all of whom were brave Russian patriots, who were drawn into the conspiracy after the preparatory work had been completed.

The idea of the overthrow of the Provisional Government by means of a conspiracy against it appeared in Petrograd for the first time early in May, 1917, and perhaps even earlier, in a limited circle of bankers and financiers. The date alone shows that what was being contemplated was not a struggle against the "excesses" of the Revolution and "Kerensky's weak-willed government," but against the Revolution itself, against the new order in Russia. The details of the conspiratory work of this original group of reactionaries are little known. I know only that steps were taken for the creation of a fund, for which purpose the conspirators entered into contact with certain political figures. At the same time they undertook to make some soundings in military circles. The man placed in charge of the preliminary work and of finding ways and means for the execution of the conspiracy was a certain Zavoiko. I do not know whether he acted as a full-fledged member of the conspiracy or merely as an agent.

The disintegration of the army, having reached its most critical point with Gutchkoff's departure from the cabinet, created for the civilian prophets of military dictatorship a favorable condition in the attitude of

THE CONSPIRATORS ON THE RIGHT

the officers. On May twentieth, in Mohileff, at the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, General Alexeyeff, was convened the first conference of officers, which led to the formation of the Union of Officers, an organization which gained much influence in circles close to the General Staff.

The connecting link at General Headquarters between the civilian and military organizers of the conspiracy was Colonel L. Novosiltzeff, a reserve officer called into service during the War, and President of the Union of Officers. He was an experienced zemstvo and political worker, a member of the Central Committee of the Constitutional-Democratic party, who had been elected to a seat in the fourth Duma but had resigned from it shortly afterwards. Novosiltzeff belonged to the Right wing of the Constitutional-Democratic party and by his origin and social interests was connected with the landed aristocracy. Colonel Novosiltzeff made regular trips between General Headquarters and Moscow. Because of his political and social position he was extremely valuable to the conspiracy. At the beginning of June (*i.e.*, previous to our military offensive and while Prince Lvoff was still the premier) the conspiracy stood as follows:

At the front individual emissaries of the Central Committee of the Union of Officers were carefully enlisting supporters in the active army. Incidentally, the heads of the conspiracy at General Headquarters were very much incensed by the removal of General Alexeyeff and the appointment of General Brusiloff in his place, as commander-in-chief, for General Alexeyeff, from the very beginning, was cognizant of the work of Novosiltzeff and his close associates, and was helping them by his advice and connections in the two capitals. General Alexeyeff, the first one to be mentioned as

THE CATASTROPHE

candidate for dictator, declined from the very beginning to play any such active rôle. After the break between Admiral Kolchak and the Black Sea Fleet, the admiral was brought forward as the candidate. But nothing came of this either, and when Admiral Kolchak went to the United States on a special mission for the Provisional Government, the search for a general on a white horse continued.

Up until the July uprising of the Bolsheviki the government's attention was concentrated on the Left, from which alone, it seemed, there was danger of new perturbations. I think that the conspirators themselves had scant hope of success. I repeat, moreover, that they had not yet found the "hero," that very same general on a white horse who is so essential for a classic *pronunciamento*. Finally, the conspirators themselves were not as yet sufficiently united and organized. And, what was most important, there was not as yet that general social-psychological atmosphere necessary to their enterprise. The financiers, staff officers and those politicians of Petrograd and Moscow who were swept aside by the fall of the monarchy were merely "gathering forces slowly" for "eventualities," to be used "in case of need," while Zavoiko, their messenger at the front, who had built himself a nest close to Korniloff, was not as yet giving tangible evidence of his work.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION FOR THE COUP

The psychologic prerequisites for serious development of the military conspiracy appeared only after the July uprising of the Bolsheviki and the beginning, on July nineteenth, of the retreat of our armies from Galicia. The beginning of the new retreat of the Rus-

THE CONSPIRATORS ON THE RIGHT

sian armies, accompanied by the usual horrors of such an operation, by panic and demoralization, aggravated acutely the general feeling of injured patriotism in all army circles, affecting equally the high command, the government commissars and the army committees.

I have already emphasized that the fundamental strategic significance of the campaign of 1917 on the Russian Front was in the restoration of military operations and the return of German divisions to our front. The decisive strategic consequences of the restoration of active operations by the Russian army could not in any way be minimized by our retreat, however painful was its effect psychologically on the nation's patriotism. This simple military truism should, of course, have been clear to such men as General Alexeyeff or General Denikin. Moreover, as we of the Provisional Government knew, they knew well that the situation in the Austro-German trenches was by no means in order. They knew that the plan of a crushing offensive in the direction of Kieff and Odessa, conceived by Ludendorff, had completely failed, because of the disorganization of the Austrian army. But these cold considerations were not comprehensible to the mind of the broad masses of the people and the troops; they experienced most painfully only the outer pictures of our new military failure, to which the revelations of Lenin's coopération with Ludendorff lent a particular acute touch.

At midnight on July twentieth, I received the first telegram telling of the enemy's break through the Russian lines in the direction of Tarnopol. On July twenty-first to twenty-second, this break developed into a determined offensive, in the course of which our troops, failing to show proper resistance in the mass and, in places, failing to obey orders, were retreating

THE CATASTROPHE

with increasing speed. On the Western Front of General Denikin, the operation begun at Krevo ended without result on July twenty-third, due to our inability to develop our initial success because of the unreliability and moral weakness of some of our units.

In the autumn of 1914 the armies of Samsonoff and Rennenkampf in East Prussia had been not only smashed but virtually destroyed as fighting units. In 1915 the Russian troops had been swept from the Carpathian heights and Przemysl in Western Galicia and rolled back almost to the Russian frontier. With equally astounding rapidity the Russian army in the same year had lost Warsaw and the entire Polish line of fortresses. But then those terrific defeats were being reported only through curt, dry *communiqués* from the General Headquarters of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevitch, while the commanding corps, indignant and resentful, either kept a severe silence or was compelled to feign an official optimism. The nation, held within the grasp of military censorship, had been fed on only vague rumors and, suffering in stifled misery, had been unable to do anything for the army.

Now exactly the opposite was the case. With the very first German blow the entire country emitted a cry of pain. And first to speak of its travail was the army itself, at times too loudly and in tones of exaggerated apprehension. On July twenty-second, the third day of the Tarnopol break, when General Brusiloff was still commander-in-chief, the Provisional Government, the All-Russian Committee of Soviets and the Executive Committee of the Peasant Congress received simultaneously a telegram signed by the Army Committee of the Southwestern Front and the committee and commissar of the eleventh army, against

THE CONSPIRATORS ON THE RIGHT

which the enemy attack was directed. I will quote the telegram, because it illustrates well what I am trying to describe:

The offensive begun by the Germans on July nineteenth is developing into an immeasurable disaster. The morale of the units moved recently into action by the heroic efforts of a conscious minority has undergone a fatal change. The fighting spirit has been quickly exhausted. Most units are in a state of increasing disintegration. Persuasion and argument have lost their power. They provoke only threats and even shooting. Some units desert their positions without waiting even for the approach of the enemy. There have been cases when orders for immediate advance to the assistance of hard-pressed units were discussed for hours at meetings. Positions are not infrequently being deserted at the very first shot of the enemy. Long columns of deserters, with and without rifles, are moving along a line hundreds of versts long, without any consciousness of possible punishment. At times whole units desert in this manner. In the unanimous opinion of the commissars the situation demands the most extreme measures and effort, for we must stop at nothing to save the Revolution from perishing. To-day the commander-in-chief of the South-western front [General Korniloff, just appointed by me to this post—A. K.] and the commander of the eleventh army, with the approval of the commissars and committees, issued orders to open fire on those who flee from positions. Let the entire country know the whole truth of the situation here. Let it rouse itself and find the strength and determination to crush mercilessly all those who by their weakness are destroying and betraying the Revolution.

THE CATASTROPHE

The army committees who signed this significant telegram were all composed of members of Socialist parties and some of those men had but recently returned from hard labor in Siberia, following the amnesty proclaimed by the Provisional Government.

Similar telegrams were received by us in Petrograd from all sections of the front. The country's immediate reply to this call of woe was a mighty determination to overcome the disintegration. The Soviets, city councils and similar organizations began to speak in a new language, summoning the nation to new and unyielding effort to save the Revolution and the state.

Active operations are absolutely essential as a curative measure for the restoration of the fighting capacity of a weary, shattered army, but such curative measures have a violent and, therefore, dangerous reaction. As an example we may recall the French experience three months before our own July offensive. I refer to the unsuccessful offensive under General Nivelle, which ended in disastrous failure and immediate mutiny in the army. This, it will be remembered, occurred in a country unshattered by any revolutionary upheavals and with a firm political organism.* After the War, Painleve himself, minister of war at the time of the Nivelle disaster, told of the critical night when he learned that one division was preparing to march on Paris. It was only three months after the Austro-German break at Tarnopol when not only the Austrian armies themselves were in a state of complete disintegration but Germany herself began giving indica-

* In general, it may be said that the entire development of the summer campaign of 1917 would have taken a different course if there had been cooperation among the Allies (England, France, and Russia). For example, the Nivelle offensive would have in all probability been successful if it had been timed with ours, and if the British command had supported us—A. K.

THE CONSPIRATORS ON THE RIGHT

tions of collapse, with the first serious disorders in the Kaiser's fleet.

In Russia, in the fourth year of the war, the manifestations of weariness in the army took place under circumstances of the very greatest difficulty and in the wake of the most profound political, social, economic and psychologic disturbances.

Concluding my references to the situation at the front, following the German counter-offensive, I will say here that the rapid retreat begun by the Russian armies on July nineteenth was not of long duration. The new psychology of the nation, the revived wave of patriotism and the unforgettable self-sacrifice of the commanding corps performed a miracle. On July thirtieth I received a telegram from the commissar of the Northern Front stating that after the loss of the suburban fortifications at Iskul "the morale of the rank and file was undergoing a sharp change for the better, with the approach of the troops to the home frontier." And on August ninth followed a report from General Beliayeff, commander of the Galician (Southwestern) Front, to the effect that the retreat had definitely been halted and the position of the army consolidated. General Korniloff himself, the new commander-in-chief, in making his first report to the Provisional Government, on August fifteenth, presented an encouraging picture of the general situation at the front, expressing his intention of resuming offensive operations in Galicia in the near future.

I have devoted so much space to a description of the acutely patriotic and extremely tense reactions experienced by Russia in July-August, 1917, in order to make clear to the reader the whole work of the supporters of the contemplated military revolt in the

THE CATASTROPHE

psychological preparation of their attack on the government.

This preparation consisted: 1, in deliberate exaggeration of the difficulties at the front and of the very great sufferings experienced by the army; 2, in demanding from the government demagogic measures, obviously unenforcible, for the restoration of discipline; 3, in vilifying all democratic organizations in the army; and 4, in waging an open press campaign in behalf of General Korniloff as the "only possible savior of Russia." This demagogic campaign of arousing in certain circles a feeling of patriotic indignation did not abate but, on the contrary, increased with the improvement at the front. And, indeed, under the prevailing patriotic sentiment animating the entire country, this play on the painful emotions of injured patriotism gained excellent results for the conspirators. By the middle of August both capitals were sufficiently filled with various conspiratory organizations, military and civilian, while the practical preparations for a coup d'état in the name of the military dictatorship of General Korniloff proceeded apace.

CHAPTER XV

LAVRE KORNILOFF

THE reminscences of my childhood in Simbirsk connect me with the Lenin (Ulianoff) family. In my youth fate brought me together with Korniloff.

Following our removal from Simbirsk, my father was chief inspector of schools in Turkestan. My high school years were spent in Tashkent.

The capital of Russian Turkestan was, above all, a military center. Many of the leading figures of the Great War, particularly officers of the General Staff, served at one time or another of their career in Tashkent. Among them was the young Captain Korniloff, who came to Tashkent immediately upon his graduation from the Military Academy. Slight of build, thin and wiry, with slanting, slightly Kalmyk eyes, Korniloff was of simple origin. ("I am General Korniloff, peasant, son of a Cossack," wrote the future rebellious general in one of his proclamations to the people.) General Korniloff spent little time in fashionable drawing-rooms, although their doors were always open to any officer of the General Staff, and had no liking for the ladies of the social set. He was regarded as rather shy and even somewhat of a "savage."

Very soon Captain Korniloff became the talk of the capital. Having mastered one of the local dialects, Captain Korniloff carried out a very brave enterprise. Alone, disguised as a native merchant, he made his way

THE CATASTROPHE

into the buffer state between Russian Turkestan and British India, at that time heart of Afghanistan, forbidden ground to all foreigners, particularly military men. On his return to Tashkent, the young captain became the hero of the hour. However, he did not permit himself to be carried away by the prospect of social success. Very soon he again astonished the "high society" of the provincial capital by marrying the daughter of a minor official in my father's department. This was too much: the doors of society were closed to him!

Many years later, almost on the eve of his revolt against the Provisional Government, General Korniloff, Commander-in-Chief, breakfasted with me at the Winter Palace. After a rather tense conversation in my office, we engaged in light chatter at breakfast.

"You probably do not remember me," said General Korniloff to me jocularly. "I used to visit your people and even danced in your house in Tashkent."

"Of course, how can one fail to remember that," I said, recalling the impression produced on all by his bold expedition to Afghanistan.

Korniloff remained all his life a man of simple tastes, a man of the people. There was nothing of the hereditary bureaucrat or of the aristocratic landed noble in him. Incidentally, all the three leading figures of the "white" movement—Korniloff, Alexeyeff, Denikin—were of lowly origin and had made their way to the top of the military hierarchy by their own efforts. Being poor, they experienced fully the burdens of an officer's career under the old régime. All three were distinctly hostile to the privileged elements in the army, represented by the Guards. All three made brilliant records at the Military Academy. And all three made rapid advances with the War, which ruined so many

LAVRE KORNILOFF

brilliant careers, of the kind promoted in court circles and ministerial anterooms.

Already in 1915, Alexeyeff made his way to General Headquarters as chief-of-staff to the Commander-in-Chief, Nicholas II. The outbreak of the Revolution found Denikin and Korniloff at the front. Both did remarkable work in all operations on the Galician Front. In one unfortunate operation, in which he showed all his personal daring and bravery, Korniloff was taken prisoner by the Austrians. His bold escape and spectacular return to the Russian lines became the source of a kind of Korniloff legend, although it did not reach the broad masses of the people and of the army rank and file.

Of all the three future leaders of the White armies Korniloff was least fit for political work. On the other hand, General Alexeyeff had considerable political acumen but was too much of a politician. In military science Korniloff was not a strategist but only a tactician, which corresponded entirely with his impulsive, unthinking nature, given to no consideration in moments of danger and acting in such moments with lightninglike boldness, oblivious to the possible consequences.

Apparently, it was this very characteristic of all too great and unthinking determination and zeal, not always desirable in responsible military leaders, that impeded Korniloff's advancement. Up until the Revolution he remained in the shade. After the Revolution, his career developed contrary to the will of his immediate military superiors. His very appointment in the first days of the Revolution as commander of the Petrograd military district failed to win the approval of General Alexeyeff. However, in this post General Korniloff proved himself entirely "weak," and,

THE CATASTROPHE

being unable to handle the Petrograd garrison, he returned to the front in May.

Immediately preceding his resignation as war minister, Gutchkoff wanted to appoint Korniloff commander of the Northern Front, but met with the strong disapproval of General Alexeyeff, who under threat of his own resignation compelled Gutchkoff to abandon his intention. Korniloff thereupon became commander of the thirteenth army in Galicia, where Zavoiko found him.

When at the time of the Tarnopol break and the beginning of the German counter-offensive in Galicia, I suggested to General Brusiloff, Commander-in-Chief, the removal of the obviously incompetent General Koutor and the substitution for him as commander on the Galician Front of General Korniloff, I met with almost the same opposition from Brusiloff as was experienced by Gutchkoff from Alexeyeff. Nevertheless Korniloff was appointed to the post. Contrary to similar opposition by military authorities, General Korniloff was at my suggestion named, on August first, commander-in-chief of the Russian armies, in place of Brusiloff, who had lost his will to command.

I have set down this account of General Korniloff's career in order that the reader may understand the events that followed and may realize why I did not and could not to the very last moment see General Korniloff among the conspirators, despite all the indications of the military conspiracy in preparation against the Provisional Government and the great amount of evidence gathered on it by myself. In pushing him forward to the highest post in the army, in the face of the opposition of his superiors and of his unpopularity among the political Left; in ignoring his own extremely undisciplined utterances with regard to

LAVRE KORNILOFF

the Provsional Government and in exercising on occasion all too much patience in this respect, I believed firmly that the incomparably brave soldier would not engage in political hide-and-seek games and would not shoot from ambush.

To Russia's great misfortune this did happen.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

I DO not know to this day when and where the final decision was taken to make General Korniloff dictator. I believe the decision was made already previous to the appointment of Korniloff as commander of the Galician Front, *i.e.*, between July fifteenth and twentieth. I am strengthened in this belief by the tone of the very first telegram addressed by Korniloff to the government in reply to his appointment as commander of the front. It is possible, however, that Zavoiko, the emissary of the conspirators, having received some liberty of direct initiative from his friends in Petrograd, determined to force developments. In its content the telegram showed only partial opposition to my demands as war minister, but in its form it was clearly threatening and insistent, bearing distinctly the character of an ultimatum. After presenting a very sharp description of the situation at the front, General Korniloff wired:

I, General Korniloff, whose entire life, from the very first day of my conscious existence, has been devoted only to serving my country, declare that the Motherland is perishing and, therefore, although not asked to express my opinion, I demand the immediate cessation of the offensive on all fronts. It is necessary to introduce immediately capital punishment in the territory of military operations. . . . I declare that if the Gov-

THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

ernment fails to give its approval to the measures I propose, depriving me thereby of the sole means of saving the army and using it as the instrument for which it was intended—the defense of the Motherland and of liberty—I, General Korniloff, will divest myself of my office as commander-in-chief.

As was shown later, this document, so astounding for a general, was written by none other than Zavoiko.

I had already made the proper suggestion to General Brusiloff with regard to halting the offensive. The application of armed force in the struggle with deserters, looters and similar traitors had already been made obligatory on all commanders by my repeated orders. The demand for the restoration of capital punishment at the front had been previously presented by army committees.

Thus, the significance of General Korniloff's telegram was not in the content but in its gesture—the gesture of a “strong man.” The same gesture was repeated soon at General Headquarters at Mohileff by the Central Committee of the Union of Officers. In a telegram to the Provisional Government signed by Colonel Novosiltzeff, it was declared already without any compunction that all members of the government would be “responsible with their heads for failure to approve the measures proposed by General Korniloff.”

The future impartial historian will not fail to note that in comparison with the inadmissible and shocking excesses of speech resorted to by the Soviets and democratic organizations in the first weeks of the Revolution, no one had yet dared to use such words with respect to the government. General Korniloff's and Novosiltzeff's telegrams went unpunished. Why? Simply because the Provisional Government regarded

THE CATASTROPHE

as excusable and, perhaps, natural the exaggerated excitement of military men who were experiencing directly the new blows at the front, and at a time when many people even in the rear had lost almost all mental and moral equilibrium.

In fact, I personally even liked General Korniloff's impulsive gesture. In the fourth month of the Revolution we of the Provisional Government could no longer be surprised by excesses of speech. Still less could our equilibrium be shattered by such utterances, for we had already had plenty of experience with the revolutionary "wild men" on the Left, who were properly tamed as soon as they were led into the harness of government and responsibility. I believe that General Korniloff and his close military friends would likewise be tamed and disciplined by the consciousness of responsibility.

On July twenty-ninth, at an extraordinary military council summoned by me at General Headquarters, General Denikin, then commander of our Western Front, in the presence of General Alexeyeff, Brusiloff and other high commanders, delivered himself of a veritable indictment against the Provisional Government, expressing his own opinion as well as that of his colleagues. He was more bitterly incisive than General Korniloff (Zavoiko), accusing the Provisional Government of "besmirching our banners with mud." He demanded that the Provisional Government "recognize its mistakes and guilt before the officer corps," and even ventured to doubt "whether the members of the Provisional Government had any conscience."

Terestchenko, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I, the Prime Minister and Minister of War and Marine, listened quite calmly to this cry of the

THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

scorched soul of an officer. At the conclusion of the grave philippic, amidst the confused and alarmed silence of all those present, I rose, shook hands with General Denikin and said: "I thank you, General, for your courageous and sincere words."

General Denikin's declaration constituted in reality a formulation of the military program upon which the propaganda of the supporters of the military conspiracy was based, which I then dubbed "the music of the future military reaction" This program was reiterated in even sharper form before the Moscow Conference by General Kaledin, of the Don Cossacks. This program was more than justified. Its substance was the demand for the restoration of normal military discipline and unity of command and the abolition of the system of commissars and army committees.

This had been all along the aim of everybody and, in particular, of the Provisional Government. The dispute was not in the aim but in the best way of attaining it. It was quite impossible to restore army discipline immediately and at one stroke. For this reason General Korniloff himself, in his remarks before the military council, did not demand immediate abolition of commissars and army committees but, on the contrary, continued to the very last day before his revolt to emphasize the positive rôle of the army commissars and army committees and the need of their preservation. General Korniloff wanted only to circumscribe more definitely their rights and activities, which the Provisional Government itself had been assiduously and unswervingly engaged in from the very first day of Gutchkoff's departure from the War Ministry.

Being unable to attend the military council at

THE CATASTROPHE

General Headquarters on July twenty-ninth because of active operations on his front at that time, General Korniloff forwarded his demands by telegraph. To a large extent these demands corresponded with those of Denikin but emphasized, however, the need of extending the activity of the commissars in the army and reorganization of the commanding corps.

On my return to Petrograd from the military council I suggested to the Provisional Government the removal of Brusiloff as commander-in-chief and the appointment of Korniloff in his place, recommending also the appointment of Savinkoff, former terrorist, member of the Socialist-Revolutionary party and the commissar attached to Korniloff's army, as my immediate assistant.

In reply to the new appointment, General Korniloff sent to the government a veritable ultimatum, striking in its defiant tone and political ignorance.

Asserting that "as a soldier" obliged to be an example of military discipline, he was ready to obey the order making him commander-in-chief of the army, General Korniloff, speaking already as such, immediately made himself the instrument of violation of all discipline. In an open, uncoded telegram to the Provisional Government, made public immediately by the newspapers, he informed the Provisional Government that he accepted supreme command but on the following conditions: 1, that his responsibility be only to his own conscience and to the people direct; 2, that there be no interference with his orders and appointments; 3, the application to the rear, where army reserves were located, of recent measures at the front, *i.e.* restoration of capital punishment; and 4, acceptance of his proposals as wired to the military council at General Headquarters on July twenty-ninth.

THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

Reporting Korniloff's ultimatum to the Provisional Government I suggested his immediate dismissal and prosecution.

I no longer remember clearly the motives which prompted both the Right and Left wings of the Provisional Government to show leniency to General Korniloff. Savinkoff tried to convince me that General Korniloff simply did not understand the meaning of the telegram concocted by Zavoiko. In consequence, I withdrew my proposal and Korniloff remained commander-in-chief. This leniency on the part of the government was interpreted as "weakness" by the conspirators, whose audacity now reached its highest point.

By this time the political center of the conspiracy, or, rather, the *entourage* of the future dictator was fully organized. At General Headquarters the military-technical preparations for a sudden blow at the Provisional Government were in full swing. From the very first day of Korniloff's appearance at General Headquarters duplicity became the moving force of its existence: the machinery as a whole continued to function as the governing center of the army but individual parts of the apparatus devoted themselves feverishly to conspiratory work. In General Korniloff's office matters military were considered together with matters conspiratory, the latter receiving much more attention.

There can be no doubt now that from the very beginning of his arrival at Mohileff General Korniloff played a game of duplicity against the Provisional Government. His entire attention was devoted to the development of the military side of the conspiracy, to measures intended to assure its success. All the motions gone through at General Headquarters, its many

THE CATASTROPHE

and varied reports and memorandums submitted to the Provisional Government as manifestations of heated military activity, its flirtation with my closest assistant, Savinoff—all this was nothing else than a smoke screen, to use a military expression, concealing the activities of the center of the conspiracy from the unappreciative eyes of Petrograd.

General Korniloff's state of mind at General Headquarters was well described by General Denikin, one of the participants in the revolt, who prided himself on never playing the game of hide and seek. Denikin arrived at Mohileff during the first two weeks in August, following his appointment as commander of the Southwestern Front. After a business meeting, Denikin tells us, "General Korniloff invited me to remain and when all had gone, he said quietly, almost in a whisper:

" 'We must fight, or else the country will perish. N. has come to me at the front. He is still full of the idea of a coup d'état and wants to see the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovitch put on the throne. He is organizing something and suggests joint action. I told him that I will engage in no adventures with the Romanoffs. The government itself understands that it is helpless. They have asked me to enter the government. But no, these gentlemen are bound too closely to the Soviet and cannot make up their minds to do anything. I have told them: give me supreme power and I will lead the struggle. We must bring the country to the Constituent Assembly and then let it do as it likes. I will then step aside and will not interfere. So this is the situation. May I count on your support? In full measure?' We embraced each other."

The words of General Korniloff cited by Denikin show the political confusion and phantasy which

THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

dominated the mind of the politically inexperienced general, led astray by the politicians surrounding him. Incidentally, not a single word of General Korniloff with regard to the Provisional Government had any basis in fact.

Shortly before the Moscow Conference Korniloff came to Petrograd. In a *tête-à-tête* in my office I sought to convince the general that there were no differences between the Provisional Government, on one side, and himself and his *entourage* on the other as far as questions bearing on the army were concerned. I tried to make Korniloff realize that any attempt at hasty and violent action would produce adverse effect on the army. I repeated to him what in May I said at the front, namely, that if any one should try to establish a personal dictatorship in Russia he would find himself the next day helplessly dangling in space, without railroads, without telegraphs and without an army. I pointed out to him the terrible fate awaiting the officers in event of failure of the coup d'état.

"Well, what of it?" said Korniloff as if thinking aloud. "Many will perish but the rest will finally take the army into their hands."

This phrase rings now almost like a confession, but at that time it was uttered in a speculative, theoretical mood. Throughout that period General Korniloff failed to realize the full meaning and significance of his own plans. Even his phrase "well, what of it, it may be necessary to try even a dictatorship" was uttered in such completely hypothetical manner that even this did not make me suspicious of Korniloff personally.

At the time of this conversation Korniloff's emissaries were already canvassing the front, transmitting verbally Korniloff's orders.

THE CATASTROPHE

One such emissary came to General Denikin. Denikin himself describes it in his memoirs as follows:

He handed me a letter written in Korniloff's own hand, in which I was requested to receive personally the report of the officer. He reported: According to reliable information, a Bolshevist uprising is to take place in Petrograd at the end of August.* At about that time the third Cavalry Corps will be moved to the capital, with General Krimoff in command, who will crush the Bolshevist uprising and at the same time "finish" the Soviets. . . .

The commander-in-chief requests you to commandeer to General Headquarters several score reliable officers—officially for the study of bomb and mine throwing. In reality they will be sent to Petrograd into the officer detachment.†

At one point of their preparations the conspirators in Petrograd were inclined to resort to terrorism, *i.e.*, to have me assassinated. This would have been a very easy thing to do, as the precautions taken for my personal safety were very meager. Moreover, no precautions would have been sufficient to prevent my assassination, for the terrorists themselves had unrestricted access to me, some of them being members of my guard and immediate *entourage*. Among these was a colonel of the General Staff whose duty it was to report to me every morning on the situation at the front. Usually, we were quite alone, discussing the military situation, with a map of the front before us. On being informed that he had been ordered by the

* This was a deliberate invention of the conspirators, for the Bolsheviks, having been driven underground, could not and did not at that time plan any uprising—A. K.

† Denikin, *Memoirs*, page 210.

THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

conspirators to kill me, I kept close watch on him at our morning conferences, without, however, changing in the least the mode of procedure. The colonel, usually restrained, well poised and calm, did begin to show indications of peculiar nervousness. After several days of this game, I finally bid the colonel good-by and asked him not to come to me any more. He did not ask for the reason of his dismissal and disappeared with a bow.

The hero of a second unsuccessful plan to assassinate me was a young officer of marines. His task was to shoot me at the Winter Palace, where the guard on the eve or at the very beginning of the Korniloff rebellion consisted of marines. The young man could have performed his "patriotic task" without the slightest difficulty or risk. But at the last moment he was not in the Winter Palace but at the home of some relatives. In great excitement and weeping he revealed to them the whole story of the plot for my assassination and the fact that he had been chosen to be the instrument of my death. The marine officer's relatives, acquaintances of a high official of the city militia, immediately reported the matter to that official.

Without giving the incident any publicity, I ordered the removal of the marines from the Winter Palace and the substitution of another guard. The marine officer was permitted to return undisturbed to his unit.

I must say that the idea of beginning the revolt with my assassination was in itself strategically a proper one, for only by dislocating at one blow the government apparatus could the conspirators hope for any measure of success. Of course, the conspirators had intended to do away with me but had finally decided to do so

THE CATASTROPHE

under circumstances of least danger and risk to themselves. In general, the officers involved in the conspiracy, brave on the field of battle, preferred to follow in their plot against the Provisional Government a policy of cunning duplicity rather than of frank, straightforward action. In this respect these officers, in addition to showing a lack of civic courage, were less courageous than the Bolsheviks, who never pretended to be loyal to the Provisional Government. The conspirators were compelled to adopt this policy of duplicity because of the sentiments of the people and of the rank and file of the army. In their revolt against Nicholas I, on December 14, 1825, the Petrograd guard officers were able to address themselves directly to the barracks and to march at the head of their troops. But now the conspirators were without any following in the barracks, maintaining their authority only in so far as it had been delegated to them by the Provisional Government. At the time of the Korniloff advance on Petrograd, the officers did not dare to reveal the purpose of the expedition even to the Cossack regiments or to the celebrated "Wild Division," which led the advance, the conspirators being compelled to keep secret from their own troops their aim of overthrowing the Provisional Government. On the contrary, the Cossacks and the men of the "Wild Division" were told that a Bolshevik uprising was in progress in Petrograd and that it was necessary to rush to the defense of the capital and of the Provisional Government.

Simultaneously with the preparation for the treacherous blow against the Provisional Government, General Korniloff's immediate associates conducted negotiations with certain military and political Allied circles. The political aspect of the conspiracy was not in the

THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

hands of General Headquarters, where General Krimoff was in charge of the military preparations, but was being taken care of in certain quiet and comfortable studies in Petrograd and Moscow. On their visit to Moscow during the Conference, officers of the General Staff conferred secretly with the political leaders of the conspiracy. To this very day, however, the conservative and liberal politicians who took part in the conspiracy, who know in detail its plan and purposes, continue to speak of the "misunderstanding" between the Provisional Government and Korniloff, placing upon me the responsibility for the result and catastrophe.

I will not cite here all the data at my disposal. The readers interested in a detailed account of the Korniloff affair will find it in my book *The Prelude to Bolshevism*, wherein I present the complete documentary evidence.

The conspiratory machinery at General Headquarters and in Petrograd was already in operation by the time of the convocation of the Moscow Conference. The conspirators sought to utilize the conference for a trial of strength, planning to proclaim General Korniloff dictator, should circumstances prove favorable during the course of the conference. With this end in view, they carried out a mobilization of their political and social forces several days preceding the conference. Quite "accidentally" the central committees of the respective military organizations involved in the conspiracy passed resolutions which while differing in text were quite similar in content. The Cossack Council, the Union of the Knights of St. George, the Central Committee of the Union of Officers, the Conference of the Military League, etc., proclaimed General Korniloff as the permanent and irremovable com-

THE CATASTROPHE

mander-in-chief. The Cossack Council even went so far as to threaten the Provisional Government with mutiny in the event of Korniloff's removal. With the resolution embodying this threat representatives of the Cossack Council appeared before me. Needless to say, they received a proper answer.

On August twenty-first, with the convocation of the reactionary "Conference of Public Workers," Rodzianko sent a telegram to Korniloff, expressing in the name of the conference his agreement with the resolutions of the military organizations.

The result was outwardly an imposing picture: General Korniloff was being proclaimed commander-in-chief, permanent and irremovable, not only by the military organizations representing the more authoritative officer circles, but also by all the "sound" and "politically mature" elements of Russia, headed by the president and members of the Duma, the former Imperial Council, the nobility, the industrial and financial aristocracy, the spokesmen of the academic and journalistic world and, finally, by the two former commanders-in-chief, General Alexeyeff and General Brusiloff.

It is not difficult to visualize the effect of this on the mind of the naive general, given to impulsive action but little able to think politically. He interpreted every word of his worshipers as befits a soldier: words must be followed by deeds and promises by performance. The fact, however, was that all the high sounding resolutions of the military and civilian grandees and of celebrated political orators were just words. Words, words, words! These men were pushing the naive general over a precipice, while they themselves remained on the brink, having not the slightest intention of risking their necks in following him.

THE CONSPIRATORS TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

General Korniloff came to the Moscow Conference in great pomp. At the station he was met by the entire élite of the old capital. Wealthy ladies in white dresses and flowers in hand fell on their knees before him; politicians wept with joy. Officers carried the "popular hero" on their shoulders. In an automobile surrounded by cavalry composed of exotic tribesmen, Korniloff, following the old Czarist custom, went from the station to the Kremlin to pray at the shrine of the Iversk Madonna. On returning to his railway carriage, General Korniloff began receiving delegations and deputations of various kinds. Regular reports were submitted to him on the financial, economic and general internal situation in Russia.

On the streets of Moscow pamphlets were being distributed, entitled "Korniloff, the National Hero." These pamphlets were printed at the expense of the British Military Mission and had been brought to Moscow from the British Embassy in Petrograd in the railway carriage of General Knox, British military attaché. At about this time, Aladin, a former labor member of the Duma, arrived from England, whither he had fled in 1906, after the dissolution of the first Duma. In London this once famous politician lost his entire political baggage and became an extremely suspicious adventurer. This discredited man brought to General Korniloff a letter from Lord Milner, British War Minister, expressing his approval of a military dictatorship in Russia and giving his blessing to the enterprise. This letter naturally served to encourage the conspirators greatly. Aladin himself, envoy of the British War Minister, was given first place next to Zavoiko in the *entourage* of General Korniloff.

As we have already seen, the Moscow Conference proved a complete failure for the conspirators. Their

THE CATASTROPHE

plan for the "peaceful" proclamation of a military dictatorship was shattered. It was then, on the road from Moscow back to General Headquarters, in the carriage of the commander-in-chief, that they decided to overthrow the Provisional Government by force of arms.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DRIVE AGAINST THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

ON August twenty-ninth the government returned to Petrograd, while Korniloff went back to General Headquarters. On September first the Germans launched a new attack on the Dvina, breaking through our lines and threatening Petrograd.

On September third the Provisional Government made the following decisions:

1. To begin preparations for the government's removal to Moscow.
2. To transfer the troops of the Petrograd military district to the direct jurisdiction of the commander-in-chief.
3. To create a separate military area, consisting of Petrograd and its environs, under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Government.
4. To bring from the front a detachment of reliable troops, to be placed at the government's disposal.

This decision was made necessary by military and political considerations. Because of the unreliability and demoralization of the Petrograd garrison, it was necessary for the government to take proper measures guaranteeing its safe removal to Moscow, which was to take place at the end of November. In addition, the evidence at our disposal made it necessary for the government to be ready to repel any attack from the

THE CATASTROPHE

Right. It was only from that quarter that we faced any real danger at that time.

Immediately after the cabinet meeting at which the aforementioned decision was taken I dispatched Assistant War Minister Savinkoff and General Baranoffsky to General Headquarters, to cooperate in carrying out the government's decision. Before their departure I ordered Savinkoff to inform General Korniloff that, while he was at liberty to pick the troops to be sent to Petrograd, he was under no circumstances to delegate General Krimoff as commander of these troops. I also ordered Savinkoff to inform General Korniloff that the "Wild Division" was not to be included among these troops. My demands were motivated by the reliable information that General Krimoff and a number of the officers of the "Wild Division" had taken a direct part in the conspiracy. On September sixth General Korniloff categorically promised Savinkoff that my demands would be obeyed. This was reported to me by Savinkoff on September seventh. But on the same day General Korniloff, in a secret order, placed General Krimoff in command of the "Wild Division," which moved immediately in the direction of Petrograd.

In the order to his troops Krimoff declared that a Bolshevik revolution had broken out in Petrograd and that the government was unable to cope with it. On September ninth, when according to the calculations of General Headquarters Krimoff's troops were to have arrived near Petrograd, there appeared before me in the Winter Palace a former member of the Provisional Government, Vladimir Lvoff, who placed before me a verbal ultimatum from General Korniloff. The ultimatum did not surprise me, but I still entertained doubt as to whether General Korniloff had actually lent his

DRIVE AGAINST PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

name to it. The entire tragic significance of what was being contemplated appeared clearly before me. Only by quick action was it possible to save the situation. I immediately took myself in hand and pretended that I did not believe in the authenticity of the ultimatum. Lvoff became greatly excited, assuring me on his word of honor that all he said was true. I then demanded that he put the ultimatum in writing. I told him this was necessary as otherwise the Provisional Government to whom I, as premier and war minister, was to carry Korniloff's ultimatum demanding the government's resignation would consider me mad. Lvoff wrote down the ultimatum point by point :

1. Proclamation of martial law in Petrograd.
2. Immediate resignation of the government.
3. My departure the same night, together with Savinkoff, for General Headquarters, where we were to put ourselves at Korniloff's disposal.

I put the written ultimatum into my side pocket and agreed with Lvoff to meet him at seven o'clock in the evening at the long distance telephone at the War Ministry, when we were to converse with General Korniloff at General Headquarters. En route to the War Ministry I still entertained some hope that the ultimatum and my whole conversation with Lvoff were a horrible dream. Lvoff was late for the appointment. There was no time to lose. I called Korniloff at General Headquarters and in my name and Lvoff's, who had not yet arrived, I began to question Korniloff on all the points of the ultimatum, with the ostensible purpose of verifying the general's demands. I wanted to make absolutely sure that the ultimatum was in his name. I asked leading questions, which could be an-

THE CATASTROPHE

swered only by a person thoroughly familiar with the contents of the ultimatum. General Korniloff's replies showed he was well versed in the matter and had given it his full approval. Especially convincing was his final reply.

Without mentioning Savinkoff, whose name appeared in the ultimatum, I asked:

"Am I to come to General Headquarters?"

General Korniloff replied:

"Yes, and with Savinkoff."

There could no longer be any doubt. It was necessary to act with utmost rapidity. On my leaving the telephone I was met by Lvoff. We returned together to the Winter Palace. There, in my office, I repeated to him my conversation with General Korniloff. Lvoff again confirmed and explained everything. In a dark, far corner of the large office, unnoticed by Lvoff, sat an official of the Ministry of the Interior. He heard our conversation and noted Lvoff's statement. On completing my conversation with Lvoff I walked out into the corridor, summoned the officer on guard and ordered him to arrest Vladimir Lvoff, former member of the Provisional Government.

In an hour I submitted a report to the Provisional Government together with the incriminating ultimatum and received from the cabinet extraordinary powers for the liquidation of the Korniloff mutiny, which was about to begin with the arrival, expected at any moment, of Krimoff's troops in Petrograd.

I will not go into further details. As I foretold, the rebellious general found himself suddenly without troops and railways, and cut off at General Headquarters from the entire country. Without firing a single shot we were victorious, for the rank and file of even the "Wild Division" refused to follow their

DRIVE AGAINST PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

officers when emissaries dispatched by me to head off and arrest Krimoff informed the troops of the use to which they were being put. Krimoff himself was brought a prisoner to my office. While under arrest in my office, General Krimoff committed suicide by shooting himself with his revolver.

On September twelfth the adventure was finished. On September thirteenth I issued an order to the army and navy presenting a picture of the anarchy and demoralization provoked anew by the Korniloff adventure.

Following the arrest of Korniloff and his immediate associates, the supporters of the Korniloff movement launched a widespread campaign through the press against the Provisional Government. Amply supplied with funds they successfully spread the falsehood that there had been no conspiracy, that Korniloff was the victim of a "misunderstanding" between himself and the Provisional Government. It was even asserted that I had been in "agreement" with Korniloff through Savinkoff and "betrayed" him under pressure from the Soviet. This slanderous invention was immediately taken up by the Bolsheviki, who used it as dynamite with which, within a few days, they succeeded in destroying the confidence of the rank and file of the army in the Provisional Government.

The Korniloff uprising destroyed the entire work of the restoration of discipline in the army, achieved after almost superhuman efforts.

Lenin, still in hiding, immediately grasped the significance of the service performed for him by the organizers of the Korniloff rebellion.

"General Korniloff," wrote Lenin to the Central Executive Committee of the Bolshevik party from Finland, whither he had fled after the issuance of my July

THE CATASTROPHE

order for his arrest, "has opened for us quite unexpected perspectives. We must act at once."

The movements of the Bolsheviks were facilitated by the crisis provoked by the Korniloff rebellion in the parties comprising the government coalition. The sympathy which had been extended to Korniloff by many prominent liberals roused among the socialist parties a strong movement against continuance of coöperation with the bourgeois parties. The Provisional Government could no longer be maintained in the composition upon which it was based on the day of the Korniloff mutiny. A directorate was set up, in whose name I had to conduct prolonged negotiations with the respective parties for restoration of the government coalition. All these conversations proved endless because virtually no one believed in the possibility of restoring mutual confidence among the parties.

In the meantime the new wave of anarchy and disintegration rose high under the stimulus of Bolshevik propaganda and demagoguery. The Korniloff rebellion was crushed on September twelfth. On September eighteenth, for the first time since the Revolution, the *præsidium* of the Petrograd Soviet was captured by the Bolsheviks. Having formed from among the soldiers' section of the Soviet a military-revolutionary committee, Trotsky began to prepare the garrison for another uprising against the Provisional Government.

As in the beginning of March, heaps of telegrams came to my desk, telling of local uprisings and mutinies, agrarian disturbances, attacks by soldiers against officers, etc. But then, in the spring, all hopes were before us. Now, in the autumn, all the fires of hope were dying. The revived anarchy inside the country combined soon with a new wave of mass desertions from the front.

DRIVE AGAINST PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

This tragedy came to pass exactly at the time when all our sacrifices were about to find their justification. The Austro-Hungarian government, having realized that the situation of Austria-Hungary was untenable, addressed to the Provisional Government a request for a separate peace. The move was made without knowledge of Berlin. It was particularly significant because Foreign Minister Terestchenko had long been preparing, with the cooperation of the diplomatic representatives of the United States in Bulgaria and Turkey, a plan for negotiations which would have meant the exit of Bulgaria and Turkey from the War. There could be no doubt, with Austria's example before them, that similar peace proposals would have followed soon from Sofia and Constantinople. The exit to the Mediterranean would have been opened for Russia. The blockade of Russia would have been broken and Germany would have stood completely isolated in Europe. Russia was on the verge of her greatest victory.

Instead of victory we received Brest-Litovsk. The news of Austria's separate peace proposal reached Petrograd on November fifth. On November seventh, suddenly and unexpectedly—unexpectedly for us, but not for Berlin—came the Bolshevik counter-revolution. The Bolshevik General Staff had originally planned the uprising for the day of the contemplated transfer of the Provisional Government to Moscow, which was not to have taken place before the middle of November.

CHAPTER XVIII

GATCHINA

THE last act in the struggle of the Provisional Government against the Bolsheviki on the Right and on the Left was played between November sixth and fourteenth, 1917.

After the abortive attempt of the conspirators behind General Korniloff—so fatal in its consequences for the entire country—to overthrow the Provisional Government, the social groups supporting the “dictator” decided to give no aid to the government in the event of its collision with the Bolsheviki. Their strategic plan was not to hinder in any way the success of an armed Bolshevik uprising and, then, after the fall of the Provisional Government they so hated, quickly to suppress the Bolshevik “mutiny.” In this way were to be realized finally the aims set for the Korniloff rebellion.

The military and civil strategists who were the authors of this plan were thoroughly convinced that the Bolshevik triumph would entail no serious danger and that within three or four weeks the “sound elements” of the Russian people would make short shrift of the mutinous mass and establish a “strong government” in Russia. Alas, having successfully carried out the first, so-called passive part of this plan, having “overthrown” the Provisional Government with the hands of the Bolsheviki, the “patriots” found themselves absolutely unable to execute the second, activist

GATCHINA

part of their program. They failed to defeat the Bolsheviki not only in three weeks but in ten years!

On November sixth it had become quite evident that the uprising was inevitable, that it had already begun. At about eleven o'clock in the morning I appeared before the Council of the Republic and requested from N. D. Avksentieff, the President, permission to make an urgent statement. On taking the floor I informed the council that I had in my possession unmistakable evidence of the organization by Lenin and his lieutenants of an uprising against the Provisional Government. I declared that all possible measures were being taken by the Provisional Government for the suppression of the uprising and that the government would fight to the end against the betrayers of the motherland and of the Revolution. I declared that the government would resort without qualms to the use of force, but that to insure the government's success the immediate coöperation of all parties and groups, and of the entire people, was necessary. I demanded from the Council of the Republic full confidence and coöperation. The atmosphere of the meeting and the sentiments of those assembled were indicated by the ovations which greeted my declaration, the members punctuating their approval and expressing their solidarity with the Provisional Government in its fight against the enemies of the people by rising from their seats. In those moments of general national indignation only a handful of leaders, representing the two extreme political flanks, could not subdue in themselves their fierce hatred against the government of the March Revolution. They kept their seats when the rest of the assembly rose as one man.

Convinced that the representatives of the nation were fully conscious of the seriousness of the situation

THE CATASTROPHE

and of their own responsibility, I returned, without awaiting the actual vote, to Staff Headquarters to resume important unfinished business, confident that within an hour or two I would be informed of the decisions and active preparations of the Council of the Republic in support of the government.

Nothing of the sort happened. The council, torn by inner discords and irreconcilable differences of opinion, could not come to a decision until late into the night. Instead of organizing all their forces for the difficult struggle against the traitors, the leaders of all the anti-Bolshevist and democratic parties wasted the entire day and evening in useless quarrels and disputes.

And meanwhile, the Bolsheviki, being already entrenched at Smolny Institute, preparing for the final blow, were proclaiming loudly that all assertions concerning "some kind of a Bolshevist uprising" were pure inventions of "counter-revolutionists" and of "that enemy of the people—Kerensky." By this maneuver, knowing well the psychology of their opponents, the Bolsheviki were successfully attaining their aims.

I shall never forget the following truly historical scene.

My office, midnight, November sixth. The Provisional Government has just met and adjourned for a short recess. A stormy conversation between myself and a delegation from the Socialist groups in the Council of the Republic concerning the final adoption by the Left majority of the council of the resolution I had demanded in the morning. This resolution, as adopted, was now of no more use to anybody, being endlessly long and involved, of little meaning to simple mortals. If, in its substance, it did not directly express lack of confidence in the government, it drew an obvious line

GATCHINA

of distinction between the Left majority of the council and the government and its struggle.

Enraged, I informed the delegation that after such a resolution the government would resign to-morrow and that the authors of the resolution and all those who had voted for it must take upon themselves all responsibility for events, although apparently they seemed to have little conception of the situation.

The reply to my outburst was delivered calmly and analytically by Dan, at that time not only leader of the Mensheviks but also president of the All-Russian Executive Committee of Soviets. I cannot, of course, repeat Dan's historic reply textually but I vouch for the substance. First of all, Dan told me that the delegation was more correctly informed than I was and that I was exaggerating developments, due to the misinformation of my "reactionary staff." He then added that the resolution of the Council of the Republic, however unpalatable to the "government's sense of self-respect," was extremely useful and desirable for its psychologic effect on the masses, that this "effect" was already noticeable, and that the influence of Bolshevik propaganda was now bound "to decline rapidly." On the other hand, Dan continued, the Bolsheviks themselves, in their negotiations with the leaders of the Soviet majority, expressed readiness to "subordinate themselves to the will of the Soviet majority" and were willing, beginning to-morrow, to undertake all measures to stop the uprising, "which had begun against their wish and without their sanction." In conclusion Dan, asserting that the Bolsheviks would "to-morrow" (always to-morrow!) disband their military staff, declared that all measures taken by me for suppression of the uprising tended only to "disturb the masses" and that, in general, my "intervention" served

THE CATASTROPHE

only to "interfere with the success of the negotiations of the majority of the Soviets with the Bolsheviki for liquidation of the uprising." At the very moment when Dan was communicating to me this remarkable information, armed detachments of the "Red Guard" were already occupying one government building after another. Almost immediately upon the departure of Dan and his comrades from the Winter Palace, Kartasheff, Minister of Cults, was arrested in Millionnaya street, on his way home from the meeting of the Provisional Government, and taken to Smolny, whither Dan had departed for negotiation with the Bolsheviki.

One must admit that the Bosheviki were acting with great energy and no less great skill.

While the uprising was in full swing and "Red" troops were in action all over the city, some Bolshevik leaders especially assigned to the task tried, not without success, to make the representatives of the "Soviet democracy" blind to what was actually taking place. The entire night was spent by these acrobats in endless disputes on various formulæ supposed to serve as conditions of peace and liquidation of the uprising. By this method of "negotiation" the Bolsheviki gained a great deal of valuable time. The fighting forces of the Socialists-Revolutionists and Mensheviki were not mobilized in time.

I had hardly concluded my conversation with Dan and his comrades, when into the room came a delegation from the Cossack regiments then stationed in Petrograd, consisting, if I recall aright, of two or three officers and as many Cossacks. The delegation informed me, first, that they wanted to know what forces I had at my disposal for suppression of the mutiny. They then declared that the Cossack regi-

GATCHINA

ments would defend the government, but only on condition of my assurance that this time the blood of the Cossacks would not be spilled in vain, as it was in July, when I was supposed to have failed to take sufficiently energetic measures against the mutineers. Finally, the delegates insisted that they would fight only on my personal orders.

In reply, I first of all pointed out to the Cossacks that declarations such as they were making were quite inadmissible from men of military duty, particularly when the nation faced great peril, and that it was incumbent upon every one of us to fulfill his obligation to the end! I then added: "You know full well that at the time of the Bolshevik uprising of July sixteenth to nineteenth, I was at the front where the offensive was then beginning. You know that, after leaving the front, I arrived in Petrograd on July nineteenth and immediately ordered the arrest of all the Bolshevik chieftains. You know, also, that I immediately dismissed General Polovtsoff as commander of the troops because of his indecision during the uprising."

As a result of this conversation, the Cossacks declared categorically that all their regiments in Petrograd would do their duty. I thereupon signed a special order to the Cossacks, commanding them to place themselves at the disposal of the district military staff and to carry out all its instructions. At that moment, at 1 A. M. on the night of November sixth, I had not the slightest doubt that these three regiments of Don Cossacks would not violate their oath and I immediately sent an adjutant to Staff Headquarters with the information that the Cossacks could be relied upon fully.

As in the morning, at the meeting of the Council of the Republic, I made a grave mistake. I did not know that while I was conversing with the regimental del-

THE CATASTROPHE

egates, the Council of Cossack Troops, meeting all night, had proclaimed the *neutrality* of the Cossacks in the struggle of the Provisional Government against the Bolshevik uprising.

Following my conversations with Dan and with the Cossacks I returned to the meeting of the Provisional Government. One can imagine the tension that marked the meeting, particularly after the arrival of information concerning the seizure by the "Red Guard" of the central telephone station, the main post office and other government buildings. None of us, however, thought for a moment of the possibility of any negotiations or agreements with the traitors at Smolny. As I remember, the government concluded its meeting at 2 A.M. and the ministers went home. I remained alone with Konovaloff, Vice-Premier and Minister of Commerce and Industry. We worked together all night, after M. Terestchenko, who had tarried a while longer at the Winter Palace after the departure of the other ministers, had gone.

Meanwhile, the uprising in the city was developing with tremendous speed. Armed detachments of Bolsheviks were closing in upon the Winter Palace and the Military District Staff Headquarters. Some soldiers of the Pavlovsk Guards Regiment set up a real ambush in their barracks at the end of Millionnaya street, near the Field of Mars, arresting all "suspicious" persons coming from the direction of the palace. The palace was guarded only by military cadets and a small squadron of armored motor cars.

Immediately upon adjournment of the cabinet meeting, the commander of the garrison and his chief-of-staff appeared before me. They offered to organize an expedition of all the forces loyal to the government, including the Cossacks, for the capture of Smolny

GATCHINA

Institute, the Staff Headquarters of the Bolsheviki. During this conversation I followed with more and more interest the ambiguous behavior of Colonel Polkovnikoff, being increasingly impressed by the crying contradiction between his all too optimistic and reassuring reports and the sad reality of the situation as I already knew it. It became more than evident that all his reports of the past ten to twelve days concerning the attitude of the troops and the preparedness of his own staff for a decisive struggle with the Bolsheviki had no basis in fact.

The government's commissar attached to the municipal administration, Rogovsky, appeared during my conference with the commander of the troops. He brought alarming news, contradicting in every way the reports just presented by Colonel Polkovnikoff. We learned from Rogovsky, among other things, that a considerable number of warships from the Baltic Fleet had entered the Neva in battle formation, that some of these ships had moved as far as the Nicholayevsky Bridge, and that this bridge had been, in turn, occupied by detachments of mutineers, who were already advancing farther toward the palace bridge. Rogovsky drew our attention especially to the fact that the Bolsheviki were carrying out their plan without any trouble, meeting no resistance on the part of the government troops. To me personally Rogovsky reported his observation that the staff of the Petrograd military district was watching the developments with utter indifference, showing no inclination for activity on its part.

The contradiction between the report presented by Rogovsky and that of Colonel Polkovnikoff was shockingly obvious. There was not a minute more to lose. It was necessary to hurry to Staff Headquarters!

THE CATASTROPHE

Together with A. T. Konovaloff and accompanied by an adjutant, I left for the staff building, passing through the endless, almost dark corridors and lower chambers of the palace, where the military cadets who were off duty were preparing for bed. The staff building was filled with officers of all ranks and ages and delegates of various military units. Amidst this military throng moved about some strange civilians.

Rushing up to the third story, directly into the office of the commander of the troops, I requested Colonel Polkovnikoff to present a report on the situation immediately. The report convinced us—Konovaloff and me—that it was no longer possible to rely on Colonel Polkovnikoff and the majority of the officers of his staff. It became urgent in this eleventh hour to take command into one's own hands, not only for an offensive against the mutineers but for the defense of the government itself, pending the arrival of fresh troops from the front and reorganization of the government's forces in the capital.

Within the district staff there were a number of high ranking officers upon whom I could rely with absolute confidence. But there were too few of them. I summoned by telephone those of them whose presence appeared most necessary and asked them to come to Staff Headquarters without delay. Then I decided to bring into action the volunteer military organizations of the parties, particularly the considerably numerous organization of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionists.

The hours of the night dragged on painfully. From everywhere we expected reenforcements, but none appeared. There were endless telephone negotiations with the Cossack regiments. Under various excuses the Cossacks stubbornly stuck to their barracks, asserting all the time that "everything would be cleared

GATCHINA

up" within fifteen or twenty minutes and that they would then "begin to saddle their horses."

On the other hand, the volunteer military forces at the disposal of the party organizations likewise evinced no activity. This rather puzzling circumstance was to be explained by the fact that the party centers, engrossed in endless negotiations with Smolny, and relying more on the force of "resolutions" than on the power of bayonets, had failed to issue the necessary orders in time.

Meanwhile the night hours passed. And the closer morning approached, the tenser grew the atmosphere at the Staff Headquarters. One honest and devoted officer, summoned to duty, came to me and after observing what was going on in the staff building and following closely the actions of Colonel Polkovnikoff, declared that he could not term the things he had seen otherwise than betrayal. The many officers assembled in the staff building conducted themselves in their attitude towards the government, and particularly towards me personally, in an increasingly defiant manner. As I learned afterwards they were engaged, on the initiative of Colonel Polkovnikoff, in an agitation for my arrest. At first they did this quietly, in whispers, but towards morning they began to talk quite loudly, almost without embarrassment and without regard to the presence of "strangers." A mad idea had struck the minds of many of them in those moments: without Kerensky it would be easier to "finish" the Bolsheviki and establish finally that so-called "strong government." And there is no doubt that throughout that night Colonel Polkovnikoff and certain other officers of the district staff were in constant contact with conservative anti-government organizations, such as the Council of Cossack Troops, the Union of the Knights

THE CATASTROPHE

of St. George, the Petrograd branch of the Union of Officers and other similar military and civil organizations.

Naturally, this suffocating atmosphere could not remain without effect on the spirits of those defenders of the government who were in touch with the staff. Already on the previous evening the military cadets, who had been in a confident state of mind, had begun to lose courage. Later, the crews of the armored cars began to grow panicky. Every moment of futile waiting for reinforcements lowered the fighting spirit of both.

At seven o'clock in the morning, after conversation by direct wire with the Staff Headquarters of the commander of the Northern front, in an effort to prevail upon him to rush loyal reinforcements to Petrograd, for the Cossacks were still "saddling their horses," Konovaloff and I, weary and exhausted by the impressions of the night, returned to the Winter Palace for a bit of rest. I remember how on the way we were surrounded several times by groups of excited military cadets. I remember how I had to reassure them and to explain all the probable consequences to the nation of a success for the Bolsheviki.

I had intended, on arriving in my rooms, to get together all my correspondence and all documents in my keeping and have them sent somewhere else for safe keeping, but I abandoned this intention, realizing the discouraging effect this would produce on all those in the palace. As a result, some of my papers, among them documents of not inconsiderable interest, fell into the hands of the Bolsheviki, while others disappeared.

After parting with Konovaloff and issuing some urgent instructions to cover possible eventualities, I remained alone in my study. Without undressing I lay

GATCHINA

down on the couch in my room. To sleep was impossible. I lay with my eyes closed, dozing, in a kind of semi-consciousness. Hardly an hour had passed when I was roused by a noncommissioned officer, who came in with urgent information: the Bolsheviki had captured the central telephone station and all our palace wire communications with the city had been cut. The palace bridge (beneath my windows) was occupied by Bolshevik sailor-pickets. The palace square was dead and empty. Not a word from the Cossacks, as was to have been expected.

In another ten minutes, both of us—Konovaloff and I—with all my adjutants were racing back to Staff Headquarters. Nothing had changed there in the two hours of our absence. No, something had changed; some of the units operating the armored cars had “disappeared.” The armored cars were now about as useful as water wagons. The approaches to the palace and to Staff Headquarters, separated from one another by the palace square, were absolutely undefended. There was no news of any reenforcements from the Northern Front, although they should have been by this time in Gatchina. There was the beginning of panic. The staff building, filled to capacity all the previous evening and all night, was being gradually deserted.

I had hardly entered the Staff Headquarters when a delegation of the military cadets guarding the palace appeared. It developed that the Bolsheviki had sent them a formal ultimatum demanding surrender of the palace on pain of merciless repressions. The delegates wanted instructions, saying that the majority of their comrades were ready to do their duty to the end, if there was any hope of at least some reënforcements. It was evident, under the circumstances, that only the

THE CATASTROPHE

quick arrival of reinforcements from the front could save the situation.

But how to obtain those reinforcements? There was but one thing to do: to lose no more time and go to meet the echelons, delayed somewhere near Gatchina, and hurry them forward to Petrograd, regardless of all obstacles. After conferring with Konovaloff and Kishkin (who had arrived in the meanwhile) and consulting with several loyal officers of the staff, I decided to break through the Bolshevik lines and personally meet the advancing troops approaching, as we believed, in the direction of Petrograd.

To do this it was necessary, first, to cross the entire city in full view of everybody, without arousing the attention of the Bolshevik troops and Red Guard patrols scattered throughout the capital. This was most difficult of all. After some consideration it was decided to stake all on one play. To remove all suspicion we determined to act openly.

I called for my open touring car. My soldier-chauffeur, with whom I had covered the entire front, was a brave and devoted man. One of my adjutants made clear to him the task we were embarking upon. Without a moment's hesitation he accepted it. As luck would have it, the supply of gasoline was not sufficient for the long journey, nor were there reserve tires. We preferred to take the risk of running out of gasoline and of the absence of the reserve tire to the possibility of attracting attention by prolonging the preparations. I took along with me Captain Kuzmin, assistant commander of the garrison, and a staff officer.

I do not know how it happened but the news of my proposed departure reached the Allied embassies. Just as we were about to leave, representatives of the

GATCHINA

British and, as far as I can remember, of the American embassies arrived saying that the Allied envoys desired that I be accompanied by an automobile flying the American flag. Although it was more than evident that the American flag could not save me and my companions in the event of our failure and that, on the contrary, it would only attract unnecessary attention on our passing through the city, I accepted the suggestion as evidence of the interest of the Allies in the Russian Provisional Government and their solidarity with it.

Shaking hands for the last time with Kishkin, who took upon himself the direction of the defense of the capital in my absence, I went out into the yard of the staff building, together with my companions. We entered my car. Close at hand was the American machine. One of my officers, unable to find room in my car, decided to travel alone, but on the condition that in passing through the city he was to keep his machine, flying the American flag, at a "respectful distance" from ours. Finally, we moved. We followed closely all the details of my daily travel through the city. I occupied my usual seat—on the right, in the rear. I wore my customary semi-military uniform, which had become so familiar to the population and to the troops. The automobile moved at the usual city speed. At the very beginning of the Morskaya, near the telephone station, we passed the first Bolshevik guard. Some distance beyond, at the Astoria Hotel and at the Maryinsky Palace, were additional patrols and detachments of Bolsheviks. I need hardly say that the entire street—pedestrians and soldiers—recognized me immediately. The soldiers straightened up, as they would ordinarily have done. I saluted, as usual. In all probability, the moment after I passed not one of

THE CATASTROPHE

them could account to himself how it was possible for him not only to have permitted this "counter-revolutionist," this "enemy of the people" to pass, but also to have saluted him.

Having passed safely through the center of the city, on entering the workmen's section and approaching the Moscow Toll Gate we increased our pace and, finally, moved with breakneck speed. I remember how at the very exit from the city Red Guardsmen, patrolling the road, came rushing towards our machine from all sides of the *chaussée*, but we had already passed them, while they had not only failed to make an effort to stop us, but had not even had time to take a good look at us.

At Gatchina we drove up straight to the palace gate leading to the commandant's quarters. We were chilled through and through by the mad drive. On learning, to our great surprise, that there were no echelons from the front at Gatchina and that no one here knew anything about them, we decided to proceed farther, to Luga, and if necessary to Pskoff. But to undertake such a long journey on a wet, autumn road without reserve tires and sufficient gasoline was unthinkable. We resolved to spend a half hour at the commandant's office, to have some tea and warm up, while our machines were to be taken to the garage of the local military automobile command to take on the necessary materials. However, the moment I stepped into the commandant's office his conduct appeared very strange to me. He tried to speak as loudly as possible and kept close to an open door leading into an adjacent room, from where we were being closely eyed by some soldiers. As if responding to the warning of some inner voice I suddenly ordered my machine detained and proposed to my companions that we resume the journey at once, without waiting for tea.

GATCHINA

Only the car with the American flag and one officer went to the garage for the necessities.

We had left in time. Five minutes after our departure a machine all decorated with red flags raced into the palace yard; members of the local military-revolutionary committee had come to arrest me. It developed that some traitors in the staff building in Petrograd had informed Smolny of my departure for Gatchina. From Smolny had come an order to have me arrested here. Our automobile managed, however, to escape from the city. But our other machine fell into serious difficulty. For more than an hour it wandered about the streets of Gatchina. After breaking through two ambushes, under a hail of shots, it found escape from the third ambush not quite so easy. One bullet pierced a tire and another struck the chauffeur in the hand. My officer, deserting the machine, was compelled to seek refuge in a near-by wood. We learned of this only next day, on our return to Gatchina from the front.

But on leaving Gatchina we counted only the minutes, jumping with every jerk of the machine, trembling for the fate of our tires. There is no use to describe in detail our mad hunt for the elusive echelons from the front, which we did not find until our arrival at Pskoff.

When we entered that city at nine o'clock in the evening we knew nothing of what had possibly taken place here. Nor had we any knowledge of the extent to which the people were familiar with events in Petrograd, or of how these events had been received here. For this reason we decided to move with great care and instead of going directly to the Staff Headquarters of the Commander of the Northern Front, General Tcheremisoff, we went to the home of his quarter-

THE CATASTROPHE

master-general, Baranoffsky, formerly chief of my military cabinet. Here I learned that the news from Petrograd was very discouraging, that a Bolshevik military-revolutionary committee was already functioning in Pskoff itself, and that it had telegraphed an order for my arrest, signed by Lieutenant Krilenko and the sailor, Dybenko. In addition, I learned what was even worse, namely, that Tcheremisoff himself was making all sorts of advances to the revolutionary committee and that he would not take any measures for the dispatch of troops to Petrograd, believing any such expedition to be useless and detrimental.

Soon, upon my order, the commander himself appeared. A very unpleasant conversation followed. The general did not conceal his intention of not binding his fate in any way with that of the "doomed" government. He also tried to show that he had no troops he could spare from the front, and declared that he could not guarantee my personal safety in Pskoff. Tcheremisoff informed me also that he had countermanded the order, given in response to my demand from Petrograd, for the dispatch of troops, the Third Cavalry Corps included.

"Have you seen General Krassnoff? Does he share your opinion?" I asked.

"I expect General Krassnoff any minute from Ostroff."

"In that case, general, direct him to me at once."

"I obey."

The general left, saying he was going straight to a meeting of the Military-Revolutionary Committee to get a clear idea of the attitude of the troops and that he would come back to me to report. My conversation with this clever, able, extremely vain man, who had so completely forgotten the call of duty, made a dis-

GATCHINA

gusting impression upon me. Considerably later I learned that upon leaving me the general did not go to a meeting of the Military-Revolutionary Committee. He even tried, by long distance wire, to prevail upon General Baliayeff, commander of the Western Front, not to give any aid to the government.

Tcheremisoff's absence seemed endless. Meanwhile every minute was costly, for every delay meant irreparable damage in Petrograd. It was 11 P.M. How could we in Pskoff know that at that very moment the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government was sitting, was withstanding the final bombardment and the last attacks of the Bolsheviki? Finally, at one o'clock in the morning, General Tcheremisoff returned to declare that he could not give any aid to the government. And if, he continued, I still held to my conviction that resistance was necessary, I should go immediately to Mohileff, as my arrest here, in Pskoff, was inevitable. In mentioning Mohileff, General Tcheremisoff did not, however, tell me that General Dukhonin, chief-of-staff at General Headquarters, had tried twice to speak to me by long distance wire and that twice Tcheremisoff had refused to permit him to do so, without asking me.

"And Krassnoff?" I asked.

"He has already been here and gone back to Ostroff."

"But, look here, General, didn't I ask you to send Krassnoff to me?"

As far as I can recall there was no answer to this exclamation. His criminal shirking of his duty was obvious and I was in a hurry to get rid of him. For there was no hesitation in my mind. I felt I must return to Petrograd, even if only with one regiment. After considering the situation with General Baran-

THE CATASTROPHE

offsky and my young companions, I decided to proceed immediately to Ostroff, Staff Headquarters of the Third Cossack Cavalry Corps and, in the event of failure there, to continue to Mohileff. While waiting for my automobile I lay down to rest. In the silence of the night I could almost hear the onward lightning-like rush of the seconds, and the realization that every passing moment was bringing everything closer to the abyss was unbearable.

Suddenly, a ring at the main door! It was Krassnoff with his chief-of-staff. He wanted to see me at once. At one jump I was in the room where the two officers awaited me. It appeared that having received from General Tcheremisoff an order, signed ostensibly by me, countermanding the move on Petrograd, which had already been begun, General Krassnoff somehow doubted the authenticity of the order, and instead of leaving for Ostroff he had begun to look for me here in the night.

"And I, general, was just making ready to go to you, to Ostroff, relying on your corps and hoping, regardless of obstacles, to march on Petrograd."

It was decided that we would immediately go together to Ostroff, with the idea of moving on the capital the same morning, with whatever forces we could muster. At this point it is necessary to stop for a moment in order that all the fatal events that followed may be made clearer. It is necessary to stop and recall the past history of the Third Corps, with which it pleased fate to bind my last effort to save the country from Bolshevik destruction. The Third Cavalry Corps was the very same celebrated corps which together with the "Wild Division," under command of General Krimoff, had been hurled against the Provisional Government by General Korniloff on September

GATCHINA

seventh. After the collapse of the rebellion the "demoralized" parts of this corps had been scattered all over the Northern Front. That was why instead of a corps I found only several regiments in Ostroff. On the other hand, the participation of the corps in the Korniloff adventure had seriously lowered its spirits, shattered its military discipline and sowed mistrust of the officers on the part of the Cossack rank and file. The officers, on their part, could not reconcile themselves to the collapse of the Korniloff enterprise and hated all its opponents, particularly me.

General Krassnoff himself conducted himself, in his relations with me, with great but proper restraint. In general, he was all the time holding back much that he would have liked to say. However, I did get the impression immediately that he was ready to do all he could to crush the Bolshevik mutiny. Moreover, not in vain did it please fate to make it possible for me to continue the struggle by pushing Krassnoff to my side.

Late in the night we left for Ostroff, arriving there at dawn. The order stopping the move on Petrograd was in turn recalled.

The advance on Petrograd was announced.

We did not know then that the government, to whose aid we were rushing, was already in the hands of the Bolsheviks and that the ministers themselves were in the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. But we could see how quickly events in Petrograd reacted on the front, destroying everywhere all the discipline and order barely restored anew after the Korniloff affair.

We had hardly entered Ostroff when we began to hear reports on all sides that the local garrison had decided to use force to prevent the Cossacks from leaving the town. In the morning, addressing a meeting of garrison and Cossack delegates, at the request

THE CATASTROPHE

of General Krassnoff, I had opportunity to convince myself that every hour's delay in the town made the departure of the Cossacks from Ostroff increasingly more problematical. Gradually, the soldier mass, disorderly and partly armed, gathered in increasing numbers around the Staff Headquarters of the Third Corps.

At last, at about ten o'clock in the morning, we received word from the railway station that the military trains were ready for the entrainment of the troops. Our automobiles moved to the station under a Cossack convoy, to the accompaniment of the threatening cries of the infuriated soldiery. At the station new difficulties developed. Under various excuses, with the object of paralyzing our enterprise, our trains were not permitted to pass. Only my personal presence among the troops finally removed all apparent and concealed obstacles. With much delay, the trains loaded with the echelons of the Third Cavalry Corps moved on their journey.

The entire "fighting force" of the corps consisted of five or six hundred Cossacks and several cannon. However, with these forces and at any cost we decided to fight our way to Petrograd, without awaiting any reinforcements or stopping anywhere.

Only towards evening of that day, in the train, near Luga, did I receive the first report of the capture of the Winter Palace. The report was brought to me by special courier from General Baranoffsky at Pskoff, who in turn had received it by direct telephone communication from the telegraph station at the Winter Palace through an officer of my military cabinet. Although based apparently on unimpeachable authority it appeared to us, as often happens in life, improbable, while the courier from Pskoff himself roused our suspicion. For with us in the train was an officer who

GATCHINA

had left Petrograd on the morning of November eighth. According to him the government was at that time still defending itself while resistance to the Bolsheviks was increasing in the city. Comparing this testimony of the "eyewitness" with the report from Pskoff, we involuntarily questioned the authenticity of the latter, believing the tragic information to have been fabricated by a Bolshevik agent in order to provoke panic and demoralization in the ranks of the government forces. And however difficult, almost hopeless, may have been the position of Petrograd on the morning of November seventh, at the hour of our departure, it still seemed to us improbable that at two o'clock in the morning, on November eighth, the Bolsheviks could already be masters of the palace and of Staff Headquarters.

At dawn, on November ninth, our detachment was approaching Gatchina, which was by this time already in the hands of the Bolsheviks, under the authority of the local military-revolutionary committee and of the local Soviet. The town was filled with all kinds of Bolshevik troops—local infantry, artillery, Kronstadt sailors, armored cars from Petrograd, etc. Despite the overwhelming numerical superiority of the "enemy" we decided to capture the town at once. We unloaded our troops and the military operations began. These operations were concluded quickly and brilliantly. Almost without firing a shot and, as I recall, without any losses, the government "forces" captured Gatchina. The "revolutionary" troops fled in all directions or surrendered together with their rifles, guns, hand grenades, etc. In their hurried retreat they even left behind an armored car. At about four o'clock in the afternoon, accompanied by all my companions, I was again entering the office of the commandant, from

THE CATASTROPHE

which less than two days before I had made my timely and fortunate departure.

In preparing the military operations that followed, I did not, of course, assume the direction of the military-technical side of the task, appointing General Krassnoff commander of all the armed forces of the Petrograd district. I was prepared, however, to support him at any point at which his personal authority might prove inadequate.

The first prerequisite of continued success was the arrival of reinforcements from the front, especially of infantry. From Gatchina I sent out many telegrams demanding the dispatch of troops. From many sections of the front I received replies that the troops were either already on the way or were about to leave. According to our calculations, based on official data, the first echelon of infantry was due to arrive in Gatchina towards evening of November ninth. We were particularly in need of infantry, as it was difficult to develop our operations with only the cavalry and artillery at our disposal. The Cossacks of the Third Corps, remembering the bitter experience of the Korniloff expedition, were eagerly awaiting the arrival of other soldiers. Our appearance at Gatchina had brought into the town a considerable number of officers who aroused the suspicion of the Cossacks, all the more so because these officers gave expression to sentiments quite reactionary.

Despite the insignificance of the forces at our disposal, we decided not to halt our advance on Petrograd pending the arrival of reinforcements from the front, for we were convinced that the first echelons would surely reach Gatchina by evening of November tenth. Moreover, it was necessary to take full advantage of the demoralizing effect produced on the

GATCHINA

Bolsheviki by our speedy return from the front and the capture of Gatchina. It should be remembered that no one really knew the exact number of bayonets and guns at our disposal.

In Petrograd the impression in both friendly and hostile circles was that our troops were numbered in thousands! Our policy of "speed and pressure" was, moreover, made imperative by the general condition of the country and, particularly, of the front. The trump card of the Bolsheviki was peace, peace, immediate peace! Having seized the central telegraph station in Petrograd on the night of November eighth and the most powerful Russian wireless station at Tsarskoye Selo, the Bolsheviki had begun immediately disseminating throughout the front their appeals for peace, arousing the weary troops, provoking their elemental demobilization and rush for home and stimulating fraternization with the enemy. It was necessary to destroy all communications between the Bolsheviki in Petrograd and the front and to stop the stream of poisonous propaganda coming over the wires and the radio. We felt that in eight or ten days it would be too late and the entire country would be overwhelmed by the masses of soldiery streaming from the front. There was no other way out. It was necessary to act, however great and mad the risk.

Incidentally, I may say that the legend that the Provisional Government disappeared from the face of the earth amidst general indifference is in no way borne out by the facts. Simultaneously with our advance on Petrograd, civil war broke out all over the country and at the front. The heroic uprising of the military cadets in Petrograd on November eleventh, the street battles in Moscow, Saratoff, Kharkoff and other cities, the battles at the front between troops loyal to the

THE CATASTROPHE

Revolution and Bolshevist units—all these show conclusively that we were not alone in our final stand.

And so, making Gatchina our base and taking stock of our forces and all possible reenforcements, we decided to move on Tsarskoye at dawn of November tenth, intending to capture it by noon of the same day.

General Krassnoff himself was full of courage and confidence, believing that he would not require reenforcements until after the capture of Tsarskoye Selo, when the direct operations against Petrograd would begin. The attitude of the Cossacks on that day, November ninth, was still quite satisfactory. At dawn, on November tenth, the Cossacks moved from Gatchina and soon their ranks were advancing along the Tsarskoselsky *chaussée*. On the same morning we received our first reenforcement: a splendidly equipped armored train, abundantly supplied with guns and light quick-firing field pieces.

But already on that morning we began to be worried by the delay in the advance of the echelons from the front. This delay appeared quite strange and mysterious. Later, we learned the reasons for it. On the one hand, we were being sabotaged by various military authorities, like the aforementioned Tcheremisoff, and, on the other, railroad and telegraph workers were hindering the troop trains going in the direction of Gatchina.

About three hours after the departure of our forces, I followed them in an automobile. I found the Cossacks at a place where I did not expect them to be. They were not advancing at the rate of speed expected of them, and it soon became clear that they would not reach Tsarskoye Selo by noon.

Observing strictly my rule not to interfere in actual military operations, I stopped halfway between Gatch-

GATCHINA

ina and Tsarskoye Selo, at the Meteorological Observatory at Pulkovo, from the dome of which the battlefield was clearly visible through field glasses. Here I learned that the Bolsheviki had apparently organized some kind of resistance near Tsarskoye Selo and that General Krassnoff, following an artillery bombardment, was attacking the town.

Indeed, very soon after our arrival at the observatory we heard a short cannonade. Then everything grew still. Time passed quickly. The silence was unbroken. There was no information from General Krassnoff. Finally, I grew tired of waiting and left for the point of concentration of the government troops.

General Krassnoff reported that the delay was due to the organization of the defense of Tsarskoye Selo, which was more thorough than he had expected, and to the insignificant forces at our disposal.

Continuing this conversation, General Krassnoff adopted a rather new attitude towards me. At the conclusion of the conversation he suddenly asked me rather hesitatingly not to remain on the battlefield, explaining in no particularly convincing manner that my presence was interfering with the military operations and was disturbing the officers. All this mystified me greatly. I could not understand it, until . . . I observed in his *entourage* a number of very familiar figures from the Council of Cossack Troops. It developed that the council had sent a special delegation to General Krassnoff. I thereupon understood all too clearly General Krassnoff's changed manner and attitude. I had not forgotten the conduct of the Cossack regiments in Petrograd on the night of November sixth, remembering their suspicious neutrality instigated by the propaganda of the very same Cossack Council.

THE CATASTROPHE

The appearance of politicians and intriguers from the Cossack Council had already made itself felt in my detachment and boded no good. My suspicion was aggravated when on my return to the observatory, after my conversation with General Krassnoff, I was overtaken by Savinkoff.

Savinkoff in my detachment as a delegate of the Cossack Council! This was and for a long time remained a riddle to me. It was difficult to realize how Savinkoff had suddenly gained the confidence of the Cossack Council, which had remained loyal to Korniloff to the last. On his own insistent plea, Savinkoff had been appointed by me commander of Petrograd, in the defense of the capital against Korniloff, and had openly denounced Korniloff as a traitor. And now he was the representative of the same Cossack Council that was so bitterly hostile to the Provisional Government and to me in particular.

On the appearance in the small room of the observatory of this most peculiar Cossack I realized in a flash the entire new situation in my detachment. I realized immediately that the appearance of this "delegation" would not pass without serious effect on my undertaking.

Time passed. The sun was already in the west. I managed to make another trip to Gatchina to attend to some urgent business, but there was no news about a "determined advance" on Tsarskoye Selo. Thereupon I again returned to our troops, planning this time to interfere directly in the military operations. I was no longer in doubt that the sudden paralysis that had befallen the troops was not of military-technical but of purely political origin.

I found General Krassnoff and his men already in the very suburbs of the town but observed not the

GATCHINA

slightest indication of military action. On the contrary, between the "besieging" and the "besiegers" some kind of endless conversations were in progress concerning "voluntary" capitulation, surrender of arms, etc. On learning the situation I sent General Krassnoff a written demand for immediate active operations against Tsarskoye Selo by opening artillery fire.

The general replied that his forces were inadequate and that, in addition, the hesitation and extremely disturbed attitude of the Cossacks compelled him to refrain from decisive measures. It was evident Krassnoff was not in a hurry. I still am absolutely convinced that with proper good will on the part of the command and with the absence of intrigue, we would have occupied Tsarskoye Selo in the morning, twelve hours before it was actually occupied, *i.e.*, before the crushing of the military cadets in Petrograd.

As will be seen later, this deliberate delay at Tsarskoye Selo was a fatal blow to our entire expedition.

Late in the evening, General Krassnoff, continuing to delay the bombardment, reported to me his intention to withdraw his troops some distance, postponing the capture of Tsarskoye Selo until the morrow. This was too much. Under no circumstances could I give my assent to such a move.

First, I saw no obstacles to the immediate occupation of Tsarskoye Selo; second, I believed it highly dangerous to create an impression of our weakness and uncertainty in the military operations. At that very time there arrived from Petrograd the army commissar at General Headquarters, Stankevitch, whose report strengthened my determination in my differences with General Krassnoff.

Stankevitch, reporting on the situation in the capital and the forces ready to support us there, insisted on

THE CATASTROPHE

speeding up our advance on Petrograd. Finally, it was decided to occupy Tsarskoye Selo at once. As was to have been expected, our detachment entered the town about midnight, seizing the city without any difficulty. This could have been achieved with equal success twelve hours earlier.

I returned to Gatchina for the night in a mood of utmost dejection and misgiving. The experiences of the day had shown that the men in command of our detachment were already in the web of intrigue, that many of them had lost consideration for the welfare of the country. I saw no escape from the situation except through surrounding and disarming the Cossack detachment as speedily as possible by other troops. These troops I confidently hoped to find in Gatchina and move them on Tsarskoye Selo. In Gatchina I found only telegrams. Meanwhile, in our absence, the situation at Gatchina had taken a sharp turn for the worse, due, particularly, to the effects of the pressure of Bolshevik forces on the right flank (in the direction of Oranienbaum and Krassnoye Selo), the Bolshevik forces consisting principally of naval detachments.

The uncertainty of the situation, the absence of exact information, the mass of rumors created extreme nervousness and tension in the town, particularly towards night. Panic threatened to ensue at any moment.

On the very same night of November eleventh and on the morning of the following day a tragic and bloody misunderstanding developed in Petrograd. At that time there were still sufficient forces in the Petrograd garrison, both in the regular regiments and in special units, ready at the first opportune moment to move against the Bolsheviks. Adding to these the

GATCHINA

cadets of the military schools, nearly all of which were preparing for action, there were still very considerable forces in Petrograd able to deal a decisive blow in the rear of the Bolshevik troops facing our detachment at Pulkowo. In addition, all the military units of the respective parties, especially that of the Socialist-Revolutionists, had finally been mobilized by this time. But due to misunderstanding of the confused situation and the misleading activity of *agents-provocateurs* and traitors, all the anti-Bolshevist forces in Petrograd had gone into action too soon, before we could be of any assistance to them or, at any rate, before we could take advantage of the fighting in Petrograd to attack the Bolshevik forces at Pulkowo.

Of course, had we been properly informed of the developments in the capital, I would have demanded immediate supporting action on our part. The whole horror of the situation lay in the fact that not only was the action of our forces in Petrograd, provoked by *agents-provocateurs*, premature, but that we knew nothing about it all that day. Only late in the afternoon, at about four o'clock, when all was over, was I summoned to the telephone by the Mikhailowsky Castle and informed of the defeat of our forces in Petrograd. Accompanying the information was a plea for help.

But what could I do now? How could Petrograd venture to rise without contact with the army? This question threw me into despair and anger.

Late at night some political friends arrived in Gatchina from Petrograd and brought the answer to this terrible question. It developed that, according to the plan of our supporters, our forces in Petrograd were to go into action at the proper moment, in full cooperation with the military operations of our detachment advancing on the capital. At a meeting of

THE CATASTROPHE

our leaders in Petrograd, on the evening of November tenth, no resolution concerning immediate action had been adopted. Active operations were decided upon later, after adjournment of the meeting, when the majority of the participants had already departed. At that moment a group of military men, highly excited, appeared at the place of the meeting with the hardly reliable information that the Bolsheviki, having learned of the contemplated action, had decided to begin the disarmament of the military schools next morning and for this reason it was necessary to take risks and begin operations immediately. And, indeed, the morning of November eleventh opened with a cannonade, the meaning and purpose of which were at first a mystery to the majority of the civilian and military leaders of the anti-Bolshevist movement in Petrograd. The *provocateurs* had been completely successful in their aim. Our own detachment could no longer hope for any assistance from Petrograd, while the Bolshevik forces facing us were greatly encouraged.

At this point I must emphasize the conduct of the Cossack regiments in Petrograd throughout the tragic uprising of our forces on November eleventh. Although the Cossacks had given me their solemn promise to do their duty they continued throughout the fighting, as they did on the night of November eighth, "saddling their horses." These Cossack regiments remained true to themselves. Despite their promise, ignoring the horrors in the streets of Petrograd, when the military cadets and their civilian supporters were being shot and drowned in the Neva by the hundreds, the Cossacks remained "neutral." Old Tchaikovsky, accompanied, I think, by Avksentieff, made the round of the barracks, pleading for help from the Cossacks. According to the testimony of participants in the fight-

GATCHINA

ing, Colonel Polkovnikoff and his associates remained faithful to their policy of permitting the Bolsheviki to smash the Provisional Government and the democracy they so hated, in order to establish afterwards a strong "national" dictatorship.

But let us return to Tsarskoye Selo. The entire day of November eleventh was devoted to preparations for battle, which was to begin at dawn on Monday, November twelfth. The Bolshevik lines ran along the heights of Pulkowo. On their right flank was Krassnoye Selo, from which they were in a position to undertake a flanking movement against Gatchina.

The reports of our scouts showed that we were faced by 12,000 to 15,000 troops of various branches. The heights of Pulkowo were occupied by Kronstadt sailors, splendidly trained, as we learned later, by German instructors. We had several hundred (600-700) Cossacks, a limited quantity of artillery of excellent quality, an armored train and a regiment of infantry, which had meanwhile arrived from Luga. Not much! To be sure, we had also heaps of telegrams informing us of the approach of additional echelons. About fifty military trains from many sections of the front were fighting their way towards Gatchina against all obstacles. But it was impossible to delay any further. The Bolshevik command was feverishly assembling its forces, preparing to take the offensive at any moment.

Early in the morning, November twelfth, the fight at Pulkowo began. In general it was developing satisfactorily. The great portion of the Bolshevik forces, consisting of troops of the Petrograd garrison, deserted their positions as soon as our artillery opened fire and under the slightest pressure of our men. But the right flank of the Bolsheviki held fast. Here the

THE CATASTROPHE

Kronstadt sailors and their German instructors were in action. The report presented to me in the evening of that day by General Krassnoff stated that the sailors were fighting in accordance with all the rules of German tactics and that among the prisoners taken by us were men who spoke only German, or Russian with a foreign accent. The fight at Pulkowo was concluded in the evening successfully for us, but we could not follow up this "success" by pursuit or consolidate it because of the insignificant numbers at our disposal. Towards evening, General Krassnoff retreated to Gatchina. At about eight o'clock in the evening, General Krassnoff and his staff, accompanied by his weary troops, entered the gates of the Gatchina Palace.

From the military point of view, this maneuver was quite proper and reasonable. But in the tense, political atmosphere of the situation this retreat provoked complete demoralization in the ranks of the government forces. It meant the beginning of the end!

Before I describe these last thirty-six hours of our agony let us return to the picture presented by our detachment before the battle at Tsarskoye Selo. This will explain more clearly the psychology of the final events at Gatchina. Unfortunately, all the negative aspects of the situation at Gatchina had attained full bloom at Tsarskoye. On the one hand, our handful of Cossacks was virtually lost in the mass of the local garrison. Everywhere—in the park avenues, in the streets, at the barrack gates—meetings were in progress, with agitators doing their best to confuse and discourage our men. The main argument of the propaganda consisted in comparing my expedition with Korniloff's: "Once more, comrades, as under the Czar and under Korniloff, you are being compelled to shoot down peasants and workmen in order that the land-

GATCHINA

lords, the bourgeoisie and the generals may be returned to power." The rank and file of the Cossacks did not long remain indifferent to this demagogic agitation and began looking askance at the commanders. And at the same time, the commanders, without exception, from the highest staff officers to the very last noncommissioned officer, having forgotten their duty, were devoting themselves to playing politics. The local irreconcilable Kornilovites, supporting those who had come from Petrograd, began "working" openly among the officers, fanning confusion, stimulating hatred towards the Provisional Government and demanding my head. Indications of treason were clearly discernible in the atmosphere of intrigue.

My presence in our detachment was regarded by members of the staff as detrimental to our "success," etc. I did not wish to interfere with our success, but I could not abandon the fight against the Bolsheviks. To sit idle at Gatchina was likewise not particularly pleasant and, what is more, it was useless. This was how I viewed the situation at Tsarskoye Selo on the night of November twelfth. I decided to go immediately to meet the echelons supposed to be approaching from the front. I had hoped also by my personal presence to accelerate their advance, as I did in the case of the Cossacks at Ostroff, and to deliver the infantry reinforcements in time to Krassnoff. As far as I remember, I sent a note to Krassnoff, in the morning of November twelfth, informing him of my departure from Tsarskoye Selo.

Great was my surprise when a short time later a delegation of the Cossack Council, headed by Savinkoff, appeared before me! They informed me, in the name of the entire detachment, that my departure was most undesirable, that it was likely to produce a

THE CATASTROPHE

bad effect on the rank and file of the Cossacks and, therefore, on the progress of the battle, and, finally, as the Cossacks had come here with me I must share their fate with them. In reply, I explained to the delegates the purpose of my journey, emphasizing that I considered the journey possible only because yesterday's conduct on the part of Krassnoff and his staff had convinced me that I had become superfluous here. And if this was not so, I said, if my departure was likely to interfere with the success of the fight, I was, of course, ready to remain, on condition that the Cossacks remain loyal to the Provisional Government.

The interview was concluded. I remained in Gatchina, to which, as I have already pointed out, the entire detachment returned in the evening.

In Gatchina itself the report of "the retreat of Kerevsky's troops" spread with lightning-like speed long before the return of the Cossacks, producing panic among some and doubling the energy and audacity of others. In the evening, shortly before the return of Krassnoff, a delegation of the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Union Railwaymen came to me from Petrograd with a brazen ultimatum, demanding on the threat of a railway strike that I enter into peace negotiations with the Bolsheviks. I was called upon to reply within a few hours. A stormy scene followed. The treason of the Railway Union rendered our situation nothing short of tragic, for a railway strike, without affecting in any way the movement of Bolshevik armed forces (already concentrated in Petrograd, with their reserves deployed along the Baltic coast) would have cut us off from all fronts and from all advancing reinforcements.

It was imperative to organize as speedily as possible the defense of Gatchina against possible blows from

GATCHINA

the direction of Krassnoye Selo and Oranienbaum. To do this had become, however, well-nigh impossible, despite the concentration of an enormous number of officers in the town. All of them preferred to while away their time at the palace, at Staff Headquarters, discussing the situation, quarreling and criticizing everything and everybody. On General Krassnoff's arrival I informed him of the Railway Union's ultimatum. Krassnoff expressed the opinion that under the circumstances it would perhaps be wise to begin armistice negotiations, in order to gain time. This, he said, would tend to pacify, to some extent, the Cossacks, who had begun to look with increasing suspicion on the commanders, and would give us a breathing space, pending the arrival of reenforcements.

The Cossacks had begun to lose all hope of the arrival of these infantry reenforcements. In vain were our efforts in showing them heaps of telegrams concerning the movements of the echelons; in vain did we seek to prove to them that the reenforcements were actually coming and that we had not very long to wait. In vain! The Cossacks were paying ever increasing attention to the speeches of agitators, being inclined to regard our assurances with ever decreasing credulity and showing a growing impatience and distrust with respect to the officers.

On the same evening of November twelfth, taking advantage of the arrival of a group of friends from Petrograd, I gave them a letter addressed to N. D. Avksentieff, President of the Council of the Republic, transferring to him, in the event of "possible necessity," the rights and duties of premier of the Provisional Government, suggesting also the immediate filling of vacancies.

I had hardly completed this task when I was

THE CATASTROPHE

informed that a meeting of the officers in Gatchina desired emphatically that I appoint Savinkoff commander of the defense of the town, that they trusted him and that they would immediately begin organizing the defense. I appointed Savinkoff to the post, which was utilized the same night by the Bolsheviki as new evidence of my "counter-revolutionism."

Only late at night did I find myself alone, with my two young adjutants, Lieutenant Kovanko and Lieutenant Vinner, who remained faithful to me to the last. It was now possible for me to think of my own fate, which did not appear particularly uncertain. One of my adjutants had just become a father. After much difficulty I prevailed upon him to leave me at the first opportunity, which presented itself very soon. The other, nineteen-year-old Vinner, who had stuck to me throughout the Revolution, declined flatly to yield to all importunities. We decided to meet all eventualities together. At that moment we already felt that we were moving quickly towards the inevitable.

In the morning, November thirteenth, I summoned a military council. Present were General Krassnoff; Colonel Popoff, his chief-of-staff; Captain Kuzmin, assistant commander of the troops of the Petrograd military district; Savinkoff, Stankevitch and another member of the staff. Opening the meeting, I presented a brief summary of the political situation as it appeared on the basis of the information at my disposal and, then, requested the chief-of-staff to explain the military situation and to report on the movement of the troops. After that I put the question of the acceptance or rejection of an armistice before the council. The opinions were given in the order of seniority, the youngest present speaking first. Only two opinions—Savinkoff's and mine—were in favor of unconditional

GATCHINA

refusal of any negotiations. All the military men present were unanimous in the view that it was necessary to start negotiations immediately, as otherwise it was impossible to guarantee the behavior of the Cossacks.

Thus, the opinion of the majority was clearly evident: however difficult and unpleasant the task was, there was no other way out; it was necessary to gain time by negotiations. In addition, I felt it was impossible to permit Krassnoff and his staff to say to the Cossacks: "We were for peace but Kerensky ordered us to fight." I confirmed the opinion of the majority and the military council began working out the technical conditions of the negotiations.

It was decided that Stankevitch go to Petrograd by detour, to inform the Committee for the Salvation of the Motherland and the Revolution of my armistice conditions. I regret that I cannot recall the full text of this document, of which I did not retain a copy. At any rate, these conditions were unacceptable to the Bolsheviki, who following our departure from Tsarskoye Selo had had little doubt of their ultimate success. But I remember clearly two of my conditions: first, the immediate laying down of arms by the Bolsheviki and their promise to obey the Provisional Government, which was to be reorganized; and, second, the reorganization of the government and its program to be determined by agreement of the existing Provisional Government with the representatives of all the political parties and the Committee for the Salvation of the Motherland and the Revolution.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon Stankevitch left for Petrograd. By this time General Krassnoff had organized a delegation to go to Krassnoye Selo, Bolshevik headquarters, to conclude an immediate armistice, pending the result of Stankevitch's mission.

THE CATASTROPHE

The delegation left for Bolshevik headquarters only in the evening. It consisted only of Cossacks, as Captain Kuzmin categorically declined to accompany the delegation, despite the importunities of Krassnoff.

Before that, early in the afternoon, following the adjournment of the military council, Savinkoff had come to me with a paper in his hand. I thought his visit had something to do with some urgent question concerning the defense of Gatchina. I was mistaken. The paper stated that the bearer, Boris Savinkoff, was commissioned by Kerensky, Premier and Commander-in-Chief, to go to General Headquarters to facilitate the dispatch of reinforcements to Gatchina.

"Please sign this paper, Alexander Feodorovitch; I want to go."

"Go ahead," I replied, returning the signed commission, although Savinkoff's journey to General Headquarters was quite unreasonable, and although he was abandoning the very responsible task he had undertaken in Gatchina and towards the execution of which he had not yet done a single thing.

Both of us understood the purpose of his departure and it would have been useless to discuss it. Savinkoff's wise foresight served only to emphasize the atmosphere that surrounded me! Only by a miracle, only by the utmost self-sacrifice of the few defenders of Gatchina could the situation now be saved. But not even the impending grave peril served to unite us, to rouse energy and initiative; on the contrary it only stimulated and added poison to the disintegration. For the majority, self-preservation became the first consideration. The Cossacks looked with increasing anger upon their officers as the cause of their impending destruction, while the officers, under the hostile pressure of the Bolshevik soldiery and of their own

GATCHINA

Cossacks, began to think more frequently at what price they could buy their own lives from the Bolsheviks in the event of the fall of Gatchina. Because of the continued delay in the arrival of reinforcements the Cossacks honestly believed themselves betrayed. The officers considered it no longer necessary to conceal their hatred for me, feeling that I was no longer able to protect them from the fury of the mob.

Thus began the night of November thirteenth. No reports from the parliamentarians "at the front." No information from Petrograd. The half-dark, gloomy, endless corridors of the old palace, built by Emperor Paul I, are filled with masses of aroused, infuriated people. The air, poisoned by fear, is filled with most improbable, monstrous rumors. Everywhere there is whispering: "If the Cossacks will voluntarily surrender Kerensky they will be permitted to return to their homes, on the quiet Don." The temptation is too great; the thought of betrayal captures the minds of many. It seems as if the long autumn night will never end. The minutes appear like hours. The rats are deserting the sinking ship. There is not a soul in my rooms, only yesterday filled to capacity. There is only grave-like silence and calm. We are alone. There are very few of us. We have stuck together all these months, united by a common fate. Nothing hinders us now from thinking quietly and undisturbedly of what is impending. Daylight had already broken when, after destroying all the papers and letters which could not very well be permitted to fall into "strange hands," I lay down on the bed and dozed off with but one thought: "Will the echelons arrive in the morning?"

At about ten o'clock I was awakened suddenly. A most unexpected report: the Cossack-parliamentarians headed by Dybenko! The basic demand of the sailors

THE CATASTROPHE

was the unconditional surrender of Kerensky to the Bolsheviks. The Cossacks were prepared to accept the condition.

The report was quite surprising! To the very last moment, despite all the suspicious indications and dark forebodings, we had refused to admit the possibility of such contemptible treason. But the fact was undeniable!

There remained but one thing to do: to have a showdown with General Krassnoff and his staff, to clear up the question of whether or not they themselves were involved in the betrayal. I sent immediately for the general. He appeared, most correct and all too calm in his bearing.

I asked him if he knew what was happening at that moment below. I asked him to explain how he had dared to permit the presence of the sailors in the palace itself; why he had failed even to inform me of this beforehand.

He began to explain at excessive length that this conversation with the sailors was of no particular significance; that he was keeping careful watch, through some trusted men, on everything that was taking place; that he even considered these negotiations an event of extreme benefit for us. "Let them talk," he argued. "The day will pass in conversation and argument, and towards evening the situation will clear up; the infantry will arrive and we will change our tone."

So far as the surrender of myself was concerned, he assured me he would never accept anything of the kind, saying I could remain perfectly undisturbed on this point. He thought, however, that it might be useful if I personally, accompanied, of course, by a good escort—he offered to supply it—would go to Petro-

GATCHINA

grad and try to reach an agreement with the various parties and even with Smolny Institute itself! To be sure, he added, the enterprise was rather risky, but was it not worth trying for the sake of the salvation of the country?

Thus spoke General Krassnoff to me. It was my last meeting with the general. The general's nervousness following upon the outward calm with which he had entered my room, the unsteady eyes, the strange smile—all this left no doubt of the actual situation. The bargaining for my head in progress downstairs was by no means as innocent as it was painted to me!

The general left.

I revealed the whole truth to those who were still with me. What was to be done? All my relations with the Cossack detachment were now broken by the Cossacks themselves. It would have been quite proper for me to consider myself no longer bound to those who had already betrayed me. But there was no way of escape. I had prepared no measures for my personal safety. Nor were any preparations made for departure from Gatchina. We were too few for any armed resistance—less than ten. Escape from the palace was likewise impossible. Built by Paul I in the form of a closed rectangle, the palace grounds had but *one* exit, already occupied by a mixed guard of Cossacks and sailors.

While we were discussing how to escape from the *impasse*, how to get out from the trap, one of the keepers of the palace appeared offering assistance. He explained that he knew of a secret underground exit, leading outside of the palace, but that it was impossible to make use of this exit before dark. If nothing happened before then, it was possible to escape from the

THE CATASTROPHE

trap by means of this secret exit. I requested my companions to lose no time and save themselves one by one as best they could.

I, personally, and Lieutenant Vinner determined not to give ourselves up to the traitors alive. That was all. Our plan was that, while the band of sailors and Cossacks would search for us in the front rooms, we would settle accounts with life by means of our revolvers in the rear chambers. At that time, on the morning of November 14, 1917, this resolve seemed quite simple, logical and inevitable.

Time passed. We waited. Downstairs they were bargaining. Suddenly, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the same soldier who had brought us, in the morning, the news of Dybenko's arrival, came running in. His face was pale as death. The bargain had been concluded, he explained. The Cossacks had bought their freedom and the right to return to their homes with their arms for the price of only one human head! To carry out the bargain, *i.e.*, my arrest and surrender to the Bolsheviki, the enemies of yesterday, in quite friendly manner, had chosen a mixed commission. The sailors and Cossacks were ready to rush into my rooms at any moment.

What was Krassnoff's rôle in this deal? In the archives at General Headquarters there is a short and eloquent reply to this question. On November fourteenth General Dukhonin received a telegram from Krassnoff: "I ordered the arrest of the Commander-in-Chief; he managed to escape."

Those who saw General Dukhonin at that time say that on receiving the telegram he was convinced that the order for my arrest had been issued because of my intention to compromise with the Bolsheviki.

The agreement between the Cossacks and the sail-

GATCHINA

ors seemed to settle the situation finally, leaving me no avenue of escape. But a miracle happened!

Two men whom I had never met or known before come into the room—a soldier and a sailor.

“There is no time to lose. Put this on.”

“This” consists of a sailor’s cloak, a sailor’s hat and automobile goggles. The cloak is too short for me. The hat is too small and persists in falling back on my neck. The masquerade attire appears ludicrous and dangerous. But there is nothing to be done. I have only a few minutes.

“At the gate, before the palace, an automobile awaits you.”

We say good-by.

Together—the sailor and I—we walk out of my rooms through the back door. Two sailors come passing the door.

They walk slowly across the empty corridor, engaged in quiet, nonchalant conversation. The rectangular corridor seems endless.

Finally, we are at the stairway. We go below to the only exit, already occupied by a mixed guard of Cossacks and sailors. The least mistake, an uncertain step, we will be discovered and all will be lost.

But we do not seem to think of that possibility at all. Our bodies move quite automatically, with perfectly balanced precision, like good machines. We pass the guard at the entrance door. Nothing!

We move under the arch. We look around. I certainly do look ludicrous. Again nothing.

We pass to the elevation before the palace. All is empty. There is no one to be seen! No automobile. We cannot understand at first what has happened.

THE CATASTROPHE

We walk on.

Where? We don't know. To move faster is impossible.

"There has been a mix-up," says my new comrade.

"Let us go back," I reply.

We turn back.

We are again under the arch. We look around. We are now being observed.

We reënter the palace, through the door opposite to the one through which we left. This door leads straight to the guardroom.

We hear a diminishing distant roar. Dybenko's sailors and Krassnoff's Cossacks are running upstairs to arrest me.

At this moment we are met by the same friend who told us that an automobile would be waiting for us at the exit.

Imperceptibly, with an air of complete indifference, he passes us, saying:

"There has been a misunderstanding; the automobile is waiting for you at the exit from the town, at the Egyptian gates."

We turn and appear for the third time under the arch.

This is already too much. A guard takes a step forward in our direction. But here, under the arch, stands a trusted friend, an officer placed there for possible "necessity." He is covered with bandages; his face and body bear the scars of war. He "suddenly" grows faint and falls straight into the arms of him, a sailor or Cossack—I do not remember—who was about to approach us.

All eyes turn upon the officer who has fainted. We slip through.

We march through the city. The road is long.

GATCHINA

Gradually we put on speed. We meet a cab. We jump in.

"Go!"

From the distance we see the machine at the Egyptian gates. It seems as if we will never reach it. We almost stifle with impatience. Finally we are at our destination. We push into the hand of the cabman a ridiculously large bill. His eyes look with surprise at the machine, flying at breakneck speed.

The machine is an excellent one. So is the chauffeur, an aviator. We speed along the *chaussée* towards Luga at a fantastic rate. The chauffeur is master of the wheel. Inside the car are hand grenades. In the event of necessity we will hurl them at our pursuers.

A few minutes after our escape the pursuit begins.

Where and how I escaped is a puzzle to everybody in the palace.

Some friends at the palace take a most active part in the preparations. Our soldier, a chauffeur, a man absolutely devoted to me, appears "infuriated" at the escape. He volunteers to lead the pursuit. In my own machine, one I had used at the front, he follows along the route of our escape.

Others take the opposite direction. The automobile driven by my "pursuer" is filled with enemies. But this does not disturb him. While at full speed the excellent machine "suddenly" breaks down. We can no longer be overtaken.

But we do not know this. We speed on. But where are we going? Surely, not to Luga? We have not the slightest idea of what has taken place there in these last hours.

Near by, in the woods, there is a little peasant home-

THE CATASTROPHE

stead. The occupants are simple folk, with no interest in politics, but honest.

They are acquaintances of the sailor friend with whom I escaped from the palace, although he has not been to see them for more than a year. We look around the *chaussée*. Not a soul is to be seen either in front or behind. We stop. Both of us jump out and disappear in the thick of the wood. The automobile proceeds.

From afar we hear the farewell of its horn.

While we had been speeding along the *chaussée* towards Luga, the trains with our long awaited infantry were approaching Gatchina from the opposite direction.

But it was too late. The first part of the strategic plan so cleverly conceived by the civilian and military "Kornilovites" was carried out brilliantly.

With the hands of the Bolsheviki the Provisional Government was overthrown. The hated man was no longer in power.

There remained only the task of executing the second and more important part of the plan: to "finish" the Bolsheviki within three weeks and to establish in Russia a "national" and, above all, a "strong government."

These three weeks have dragged out too long.

CHAPTER XIX

CONCLUSION

WITH Gatchina ended the history of the Provisional Government's struggle against Russia's foreign foes and her enemies within.

The natural center of the people's will and national consciousness, created by the Revolution itself, was finally destroyed by the combined efforts of the irresponsible extremists on the Right and on the Left.

Under the social, political and international conditions of that period as described in this book, it was inevitable that of the two extremes seeking dictatorship over Russia the victory should go to the dictators on the Left.

But on capturing the machinery of government, the Bolsheviks had by no means become the government of the country. On the contrary, the day of the official victory of Leninite reaction became only the first day of a long, most cruel and extremely bloody armed struggle of the Bolsheviks for power over the Russian people and the Russian state, which continues to this day.

The transfer of supreme power by the entire country into the hands of the Provisional Government in March, 1917, amidst the sudden outburst of anarchy in the first days of the Revolution, signified the prevention of civil war. The forcible seizure of the machinery of government by the Bolsheviks in November opened for Russia the period of civil war and ter-

THE CATASTROPHE

rorism, the period which has not yet found the conclusion.

"It is imperative to transform the exterior war of peoples into an interior war of classes," wrote Lenin in 1915. In November, 1917, this product of the madman's delirium became a reality for Russia.

I repeat: there is nothing more ridiculous than the opinion widely prevalent abroad that the Bolsheviki seized power in Russia without any serious resistance on the part of the "passive" nation. In reality, there was not a city of importance in Russia where street fighting was not in progress in the autumn of 1917. In the summer of 1918 the democratic forces of Russia created in the Volga region a government and an army for the defense of a free, republican order. The constant and stubborn resistance of the peasantry more than once provoked open rebellions.

The struggle of the organized forces of democracy ended in complete failure, under the pressure of the supporters of dictatorship on the Right and the Left. The centrifugal political forces of Russian democracy were temporarily wiped off the stage of history, while the representatives of two dictatorships—Red and White (Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel)—contended for supremacy on the battlefields of civil war.

It is a common failure of people to fail to comprehend events occurring before them or to perceive the causation and connection of these events. It is because of this that the Bolsheviki have been able to deceive public opinion abroad into the belief that the civil war and the reign of terror had been forced upon them by the White generals and the other "bourgeois counter-revolutionists."

I have always been an uncompromising opponent of the activities of the so-called White dictators. I was

CONCLUSION

and I remain an opponent of the blockade of Russia and of foreign military intervention in her struggle against the Bolsheviki. Nevertheless, one must not forget that all the evil done to Russia by the heirs of General Korniloff and by foreign intervention was only the inevitable consequence of the unpardonable crime committed by Lenin: the violent coup d'état carried out in the name of a minority dictatorship, on the eve of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

Even after their reactionary coup d'état of November seventh, the Bolsheviki still had an opportunity to extinguish the growing flames of civil war and to halt the destruction and dissolution of Russia. This they could have done by submitting to the authority of the Constituent Assembly.

Under the Provisional Government the Bolsheviki passed as the most devoted supporters of democracy. "The speediest possible convocation of the Constituent Assembly" was one of their most insistent demands. One of the outstanding accusations which had been hurled daily against the Provisional Government by Lenin and his followers was that we had sought to postpone unduly the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. But all this democratic enthusiasm on the part of Lenin and his lieutenants was mere demagogic play on the sentiments of the people, who had faith in the Constituent Assembly and wished for its convocation.

In reality, as Lenin himself put it quite bluntly at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party, October 23, 1917, the Bolshevik knew quite well that the Constituent Assembly would be against them. It was precisely for this reason that two weeks before the opening of the campaign for the election to the Constituent Assembly, the Bolsheviki executed their reactionary coup d'état, made necessary to prevent

THE CATASTROPHE

Russia's success in her negotiations with Austria following Vienna's plea for a separate peace. A separate peace with Austria, followed soon thereafter by peace with Bulgaria and Turkey and by the isolation of Germany would have meant the end of the War, the triumph of the Provisional Government, the victory of democracy and the end of all efforts at the establishment of dictatorship. It was the last chance the Bolsheviks had and Lenin was determined not to lose it.

The coup of November seventh sealed the fate of the Constituent Assembly. But neither the people nor even the leaders of the democratic anti-Bolshevist parties understood this at the beginning. They could not conceive the possibility of a Bolshevik attack on the sovereign will of the people, expressed by the Constituent Assembly.

However, the Bolsheviks themselves hoped at first that with the overthrow of the "bourgeois" Provisional Government and with the machinery of power in their hands the elections to the Constituent Assembly would bring a Bolshevik majority. This, of course, failed to develop.

The peasant majority of the first Russian Constituent Assembly, headed by the Social-Revolutionary party, did not betray the principles of democracy and the fundamental traditions of the liberation movement. It refused to give its approval to the coup d'état of November seventh.

On the very first day of its convocation (January 5, 1918), the Constituent Assembly was dispersed by the bayonets of drunken Bolshevik sailors. Over the telephone from Smolny Institute Lenin demanded the shooting of the chosen representatives of the people. The demand failed to reach in time the proper destination.

CONCLUSION

On the morning of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly a peaceful demonstration of unarmed thousands in favor of the Constituent Assembly was dispersed by the rifles of Lettish Sharpshooters, brought into Petrograd for the defense of the Bolsheviks against the people. On the same day A. I. Shingarioff and F. F. Kokoshkin, former members of the Provisional Government and duly elected members of the Constituent Assembly were foully murdered in their beds in a hospital by their own Bolshevik guards.

In defending their reactionary policy before the workers of the West, the Bolsheviks justify their dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by asserting that the assembly was composed of the "class enemies of the workers and peasants." This is, of course, a palpable falsehood. Even were we to accept for the sake of argument the demagogic and deeply erroneous viewpoint according to which every nonsocialist is a "class enemy" of the workers and peasants, the number of such enemies in the Constituent Assembly did not exceed fifteen.* And even those were not admitted to the Constituent Assembly by the Bolsheviks. Thus, the Assembly dispersed by the Bolsheviks consisted solely of representatives of democratic and socialist parties.

Ten years have passed since the fall of the Provisional Government and the forcible dissolution of the Constituent Assembly created by that government, but the aims of the Bolshevik dictatorship remain as irreconcilable as ever with the fundamental life interests of Russia.

* Two-thirds of the Constituent Assembly consisted of Social-Revolutionaries. There were less than a score Mensheviks and less than fifteen Constitutional-Democrats. The Bolsheviks, therefore, controlled less than one-third of the membership.

THE CATASTROPHE

Leninism represents the most complete political, social and economic reaction, unprecedented in the history of Europe. And like all reaction, the dictatorship of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party is utterly incapable of any gradual, evolutionary and peaceful readjustment of its substance.

To be sure, Russia has during the ten years returned from the complete economic paralysis of the period of integral Leninism (1918-20), styled shamefacedly by the Bolsheviki as "military communism," through the "Nep" to purely capitalist forms.* But this capitalism represents a most backward, primitive, avaricious and poorly productive order, based upon the most cruel exploitation of the workers and peasants.

The experiment of the Bolshevik reaction has proved once more that no social or political progress is possible without recognition and affirmation of the rights of the individual to complete liberty of thought, of conscience and of expression.

Social welfare, popular enlightenment, domestic order and international security will not be assured to the Russian people as long as the Bolsheviki continue to hold Russia in the grip of their party dictatorship. For no social order capable of guaranteeing to the people the blessings of work and freedom is possible in a country the people of which are deprived of fundamental human rights and civil liberties, of economic initiative and of the protection of law based and administered on the principle of equality. Where "party

* The "Nep"—new economic policy—was proclaimed by Lenin in the spring of 1921, after the celebrated revolt of the Kronstadt sailors, a series of peasant uprisings and the terrible famine of that year, a famine such as had not been experienced by Russia since 1613. The "Nep" restored internal economic freedom to the villages and freedom of trade in the cities—A. K.

CONCLUSION

expediency" gives way to social and national interest there can be no civilization and no real progress.

To-day, after ten years of Bolshevist domination, Russia stands at the starting point of the circle of Leninism: terrorism and severe economic crisis. These are the results of acute, unnatural, artificial economic and political causes, collectively expressed in the nature and substance of dictatorship, which stifles the independent, creative life and activity of the people.

In the struggle for liberation Russia must inevitably return to the road of popular, national, democratic construction, the road upon which the Russian people embarked—hesitatingly and with uncertain step—in March, 1917!

(1)

THE END